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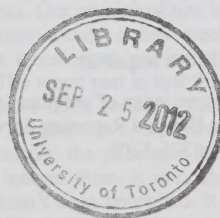
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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 19 September 2012

Mercredi 19 septembre 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 19 September 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 19 septembre 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OPERATOR ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ D'EXPLOITATION DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 12, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité pour fusionner la Société indépendante d'exploitation du réseau d'électricité et l'Office de l'électricité de l'Ontario, modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's great to rise today to speak to Bill 75, but first I'd like to just say to all members of the House that everyone really cleans up quite nicely after a wet outing at the International Plowing Match yesterday, including yourself, Speaker. You clean up nicely after a muddy day yesterday. It was great to see the bipartisan support at the International Plowing Match, with some ministers helping one of our colleagues out of a bit of a swamp. So, again, it was great to see the bipartisan support at the International Plowing Match yesterday.

Again, Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise to discuss Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, 2012. This act aims to change the Electricity Act to allow for the merger of the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority.

I think that it's important to note that this piece of legislation is typical of this Liberal government's approach, because it does not get at the root of the problems in Ontario's electricity sector. Once again, we have a piece of legislation that has quite a fancy title, but really very

little substance, and it really fails to address the concerns Ontario families and Ontario businesses are facing out there.

In Ontario today, we have some very significant problems, which the government is well aware of, or we hope that they're well aware of. Ontario is drowning in debt, a huge debt. We're faced with a debt heading toward \$411 billion, and not much is being done to address this massive tsunami that's headed for Ontario taxpayers. We keep seeing our problems being ignored by this government. Small business owners, families and seniors alike are all looking for relief, and instead they are given legislation that does the complete opposite.

Since being elected back in October 2011, I've joined with my fellow PC caucus members in an effort to get this government to ensure that hydro rates become affordable. We have fought to stop further wind developments until third party health and environmental studies have been completed, and we have strived to ensure that local voices are included in the discussions regarding the further development of green energy installations. We've been advocating for this for almost a year, and a lot further back than that, Speaker. I remember talking about this when I was a candidate in the riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, well before the election of 2011. But sadly, not much has changed except that more people and more communities are coming out against these green energy schemes. The people feel robbed and they feel ignored. They want to be involved in decisions that impact their local communities. Instead, they're being completely shut out.

In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, the people have concerns. Our municipalities have concerns, and in fact Middlesex county a few weeks ago unanimously supported a moratorium on industrial wind farms immediately. The worst part is that this government doesn't want to address these concerns that these municipalities have, these families have, that small businesses and all businesses across the province have. This government completely ignores them. It is fundamentally wrong that the public hasn't been consulted. It seems that this government prefers not to consult the people that they represent. In fact, I can tell you that a number of months ago I held a town hall meeting in Strathroy, close to the Minister of Energy's riding. Actually, our ridings join; they abut each other. We sent the Minister of Energy an invitation at least a month before this town hall meeting. He wouldn't even drive 20 minutes to meet the 300 people who wanted to discuss the intrusion of these industrial wind farms in their own backyards.

The Minister of Energy expressed that he anticipated savings would result from Bill 75. You know, I just don't trust and I think many Ontario families just don't trust this government's numbers anymore. This legislation puts more power in the hands of the minister and puts the minister and his agency under much less scrutiny—both pretty obviously things that I think this minister would enjoy. They're things that the minister actually—in fact, Speaker, as you're well aware of, this minister might be the first minister in Ontario history to be found in contempt of this House. So I can see him obviously advocating for this change to have more power.

We all know that this Liberal government can't be trusted anymore. Just look at how everything has played out with regard to the Samsung deal, the Ornge scandal—and we know about the Ontario Power Authority when it comes to being less than transparent and co-operative. Of course, don't forget the king of all scandals under this government, the eHealth scandal, for which I believe the tally now is about \$2.5 billion. For example, we're still waiting to see what the costs are related to the cancellation of both the Oakville and Mississauga power plants, which some have estimated to be in the \$1-billion range. Now, I guess if we could ever see those documents, if the minister would release those documents to the public, to the members of this Legislature, we would have a clearer understanding of the seriousness and the crisis of this scandal under this Liberal McGuinty government.

We have learned from nine years of experience and the loss of billions of taxpayer dollars that the Minister of Energy is the last person who would be working within a system that requires transparency. Our party believes that the Ontario Power Authority should not be merged, but abolished. It was formed seven years ago as a 15-person transitional body, created by this government to manage Ontario's energy supplies. Today it's a whopping 235-person mega-agency, a permanent entity where 87 people earn over \$100,000 a year and the chief executive officer earns in the neighbourhood of \$600,000 a year. In just seven years it has burned through over \$375 million in expenditures, and its expenses have risen from \$14 million in 2005 to almost \$80 million today. This is just another example of more scandal and more waste inside the McGuinty Liberal government.

0910

Just last week, we saw another agency with another scandal on its hands. This time it was MPAC. Of course, we're very well aware of that situation. For a two-and-a-half-hour swanky conference in Toronto, when movie stars were flooding the city, this government agency cost taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars. We need leadership by example, and clearly this government doesn't meet that test.

If this Liberal government understood the challenges facing Ontario's families, it would address these unaffordable expenses and it would also address unaffordable public sector salaries. Shifting bureaucrats and creating an arm's-length monster agency further highlights that

the government still doesn't recognize the severity of Ontario's debt and spending crisis. The government has claimed it will save money, but it has yet to show us how it plans to do so or how these savings will come about.

Speaker, this government is clearly out of touch. We're seeing that they're gasping for air from one day to the next, from one scandal to the next. We've seen this over the last number of years, but it's on a daily basis now. There was MPAC last week; there's this minister refusing to release documents that taxpayers clearly have a right to and deserve to see.

I said in the House only a week or two ago that the choice is clear, Speaker: It's bankruptcy or prosperity. The McGuinty Liberals are choosing the path of bankruptcy, a debt of \$411 billion, scandal and waste. On this side of the House, the Ontario PC caucus, we choose prosperity. We're going to create hundreds of thousands of jobs, and we're going to get the books back in balance in the province of Ontario.

The Liberals are more concerned with increasing the size and overall cost of government than creating jobs and growing Ontario's economy. This is not a government that cares for Ontario; this is a government that cares about preserving their rule and appointing their friends and political cronies to important and high-paying positions. Bill 75 is just another example of this. Just months ago, the Auditor General said that we lost \$1.8 billion exporting surplus power to Quebec and the United States, and by 2015, hydro bills in Ontario are going to be higher than anywhere in North America.

With that, I will end my comments, but clearly we aren't going to support another mega-agency.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I enjoyed listening to the comments from my colleague here to the immediate right, as usual. It doesn't mean the comments are right, but anyway, I agree with a lot of what he was saying.

One of the biggest steps this bill does is it actually merges some of the processes that are there, which will be beneficial to a lot of consumers across Ontario. What I was hearing throughout the many days I go through my riding or at events or even at the doorstep was that people are definitely asking for savings, and if this is going to be part of the process where we'll be able to provide them with some savings. I think that's a good step forward.

What concerns me about this particular bill is the step that is being removed out of it. That's what's concerning, and it's not always easy to understand the process that is bringing accountability and insight so that individuals can participate and partake in where those savings or where those mergers are going to take place and how that's going to go forward. We need to make sure that those processes are still there, so that individuals in my community of Algoma-Manitoulin have that opportunity to offer what their ideas might be or where they want to scrutinize the process.

You know, there's nothing wrong with listening to people's thoughts. There's nothing wrong with that, Mr.

Speaker. Actually, we should welcome that process. We should embrace that process. We shouldn't limit our communities and our individuals and our stakeholders from offering their ideas, their insight, their expertise into this particular bill. So it's a small step going forward when we're looking at merging it, but it's a big step back when we're taking out the oversight and the accountability within this process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, in response to the remarks given by the honourable members from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Algoma-Manitoulin, it's my pleasure to rise in this House and to contribute to the debate on Bill 75.

As the member from Algoma-Manitoulin rightly indicated in his remarks, this bill is about—part of it, in fact, is about saving the money for taxpayers. We are amalgamating two agencies, and by this amalgamation, we are going to save \$25 million for the taxpayers. Actually, Mr. Speaker, last year, we asked the government agencies to look for efficiencies and savings in their operations, and they all responded by a \$1-billion saving in their operations. This is a huge saving for the taxpayers.

This new agency, which is going to be created as a result of the amalgamation of the two existing agencies, is going to streamline the operation within our electricity system: the Ontario Power Authority and Independent Electricity System Operator. Actually, this amalgamation is in the line of what the NDP has been advocating for some time, to amalgamate all electricity system agencies and corporations. We are not going to do that, of course, but this is a right step in that direction where we are amalgamating two agencies.

The new agency, Mr. Speaker, once it is created, and if the bill is passed, is going to be responsible for market operations in the province in the electricity sector, as a distinct function from the procurement and contract-management function. It's also going to provide opportunities to increase contract efficiencies. It will also streamline the system to reduce administrative burden. That's where we are going to make savings for the taxpayers, and it's also going to create an electricity system which is more efficient.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: Pardon my voice this morning.

The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I believe, summarized exactly our position on this fruitless activity of this government. It sort of reminds me of the issue of moving the gas-fired plants from Mississauga and Oakville. A waste of money—taxpayers' money—is what I'm talking about. He made it very clear that this organization that's being amalgamated, these two organizations that are being amalgamated—one would have to wonder what the exit costs will actually be, because all of those employees in the OPA and the IESO will be severed. They'll receive severance pay and be hired back

the next day if this new organization—which has another acronym; I think it's the OESO.

The real issue here is that our position, and Tim Hudak's in the last election—we recognized that the OPA was a transition agency and, as such, really should have been wound up. Now what they're doing is creating another organization, another bureaucracy and a needless amount of costs. I think the point he made summarized very well. He said Ontario now has the highest electricity costs in Ontario, but also in Canada and in North America. And who is that going to affect most? The hard-working people of Ontario, people on fixed incomes. They're being completely euchred.

As far as I'm concerned, this is another kind of a shell game by this minister and by this government, and it's already an organization that—the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex mentioned that they've burned through almost a half a billion dollars, including all the salaries and benefits. It's shameful. That's why Ontario's in such a mess.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has two minutes to respond.

0920

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to thank the honourable member from Algoma-Manitoulin, the member from Richmond Hill and also my colleague the right honourable member from Durham.

As I said, this government is more concerned and their priorities are to create mega-agencies, more government, more people working for the Dalton McGuinty Liberals. In fact, we just have to look back to the August job numbers. I think that in itself signals where this government is taking Ontario, and that's down the path toward bankruptcy, toward that \$411-billion debt.

In August, 57,000 jobs were lost in the private and self-employed sectors, yet they hired 33,200 more people to work for the government here in Ontario. Clearly, that's a path that's unsustainable in the economic times that we live in. We need smaller government, not larger government.

Another proof point on that is that when this Premier came to power in 2003, 20,000 people working for his government earned \$100,000 or more. This year, that number is hitting 80,000 people earning \$100,000 or more. That's why we have a \$16-billion deficit and a debt headed toward \$411 billion.

Speaker, we're not going to support Bill 75. This government clearly is hell-bent on taking Ontario down the wrong path, wasting billions of dollars on cancelled power plants, Ornge, eHealth, MPAC, and all their other agencies. The PC Party will stand up for taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act. As a very rough overview, this bill will amalgamate the Ontario Power Authority

and the Independent Electricity System Operator. That is certainly something I favour. In fact, last year we in the NDP campaigned on merging all but one of the various bodies involved with the production and delivery of our electricity here in Ontario. We will all remember that it was Mike Harris who dismantled Ontario Hydro 12 years ago. Breaking it up and privatizing some of it, he created huge, bloated bureaucracies. This approach has been continued by the Liberal government, and the results for stakeholders have been disastrous.

At the end of the day, what counts to the people in my riding of Hamilton Mountain, along with every other Ontarian, is the amount that they have to pay on their hydro bills; it's as simple as that. Those are the stakeholders who every month or two see the bottom line that they have to pay. That's what matters to them, and that's what tells them that this has been disastrous. As I said, we would prefer to see some more mergers, but these two are a small step in the right direction. The government estimates to save around \$25 million. I guess time will tell to see how true that estimate will be.

So, Mr. Speaker, if that's all that the bill was about, we might have few issues with it, other than the fact that it could be merging more of our electricity partners. Unfortunately, that isn't all that this bill is about. Those on the other side of this Legislature aren't saying too much about the other aspects—aspects that are a great cause of concern over here, and should be a great concern to the public.

This act aims to make one huge dent in the ability of the public, of stakeholders, to scrutinize the government's plan with respect to energy. It removes the Ontario Power Authority's power and duty to develop an integrated power system plan for approval by the Ontario Energy Board, and the OEB's power and duty to review that plan for economic prudence, cost-effectiveness and regulatory compliance. Instead, we have ministerial energy plans, and our ability to scrutinize, question and ask for justifications of those plans will be seriously curtailed. Although the minister must consult with the Ontario Energy Board, the proposed process is far removed from the current requirement of an independent review of the IPSP by the Ontario Energy Board.

Under the current process, stakeholders can test in a proceeding before the energy board the government's plan and, importantly for the public, the effect those plans have on our hydro rates. It provides an opportunity to question the assumptions of cost-effectiveness of a long-term energy plan and major procurement in a formal way in front of the energy board. That scrutiny will be lost with this bill, and that can only be bad for the people of Ontario.

As I mentioned, under the bill, the minister must consult with the Ontario Energy Board. It doesn't say that the consultation should be public. It doesn't say anything about public hearings. It deprives everyone who worries about the economic impact or about the environmental impact of our electricity system of the ability to question the minister in public hearings and to test the evidence of the minister and the government.

This is an important part of this bill, and it is the part that the government doesn't want to talk about. They don't want to talk about how they are changing the way the energy planning is done, about how they are severely limiting the way the people of Ontario can review, scrutinize and question the planning. The act leaves almost everything up to the discretion of the minister, and our very recent history has shown us that this just isn't good enough.

It's interesting that this comes from the same minister who refused to provide information and numbers around the decision of cancelling the Mississauga power plant—you know, "that" plant, a plant that had been in the works for years, ditched at the last minute to save a few Liberal seats. Members will remember that the opposition put forward a motion at the estimates committee to get the minister to provide documents in relation to the cancellation of the Mississauga plant. When they didn't get them, the committee passed a motion asking the Speaker to find the Minister of Energy in contempt. Just last week, the Speaker agreed and gave the House leaders until Monday to resolve this issue. If they can't do it, he will step in, and we'll see how that unfolds.

But, Mr. Speaker, I can't help but wonder: When even a committee of this Legislature has such difficulty getting information on important matters from the Minister of Energy, I strongly question the advisability of leaving things to that minister's discretion. If we were to give the minister even more protection against scrutiny, as this act does, how much worse will it get? This is one example that this isn't just about that particular minister; it's about how good government policy is developed.

Give stakeholders an opportunity to question and test what's being put forward. Yes, it will mean some difficult questions; yes, it will require some homework on the part of the government, but the end result is better policy.

A few speakers have mentioned the so-called smart meters. There's another example of policy that could have used a bit of scrutiny, a bit of number crunching, a few tests of assumptions before moving forward. We've spent somewhere in the range of \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion across Ontario on smart meters. We've heard many stories that say that maybe they were not so smart. There has been plenty to complain about. According to documents from the consultants involved, it was predicted that the smart meters would likely reduce the amount of power consumed by houses by just 1%. Given that houses account for about 30% of electricity use, that means we would save one third of 1% in the usage at a cost of \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion. With a bit more scrutiny and a few more questions being asked, it's hard to imagine that we couldn't have found a better way to spend \$2 billion.

Mr. Speaker, we don't need less scrutiny; we need more scrutiny. The cost of electricity in this province is higher than anywhere else in Canada, and that cost is evident to everyone every time they open their hydro bill. This Liberal government is pushing ahead with plans to invest in nuclear energy at a huge expense to the province. We've been in this nuclear energy game for, what,

50 years? Every time an investment is made, the budget projections have been wildly short of the mark. That pattern is so predictable. We know before we even start that the costs will be overrun. Even before the overruns, we are talking about huge amounts of money, tens of billions of dollars. Do we really want to be going into this sort of long-term planning with less scrutiny? Given the history of these projects, do we really think that's a wise move? I think not.

0930

When the minister was asked about the cost of refurbishing Darlington, the response was that the ultimate cost was unknown. This government is making major decisions to invest in our long-term energy strategy, and they don't know the costs. With this sort of approach—when the best option is the one you like the best, with no clear indication of why you like it—is it any wonder that our bills are going up and up? Is it any wonder that the public are up in arms about what they have to pay?

When questions have been put before the minister relating to investment in nuclear power, or to the Mississauga power plant, he has either been unwilling or unable to answer them. I don't know which is better. Either way, it's not good enough.

Now he wants legislation to allow him to avoid the tough questions in a public forum, legislation that allows him to duck scrutiny. Well, Mr. Speaker, that isn't good enough either. Should the bill make it to committee, it needs to be amended to correct this wrong-headed approach. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's again a pleasure to rise in this House and contribute to the debate on Bill 75.

In response to the honourable member from Hamilton Mountain, I would like just to add that she rightly touched a little bit on the fact that our electricity system under the PC government was in a very, very untidy situation. When we came to office in 2003, we overhauled the electricity system. For example, we built and maintained about 5,000 kilometres of power lines, which is the distance from Toronto to Vancouver. It's a huge, long distance of power lines which we have repaired, maintained and rebuilt.

We also added 10,000 megawatts of new generating capacity to our system. This is a significant increase in our generation capacity. In the past, again before 2003, we imported lots of electricity from the U.S. Actually, the government of the day established diesel generators and they manufactured and produced electricity for the price of \$2.54, and they lost over \$1 billion of the taxpayers' money just on that very point.

Today in our province of Ontario we have 5.2 million customers for our electricity service, and one fifth of these are 60 major industrial users, which are our customers. Our electricity comes from nuclear sources. Fifty per cent of our electricity comes from three nuclear sites—Darlington, Bruce and Pickering—and these used to be the best nuclear reactors in the world. They were

among the top 10 in the world, and they still are the best performers amongst more than 440 nuclear power stations around the world.

Our hydro power, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Reza Moridi:—we have 200 megawatts—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Most of us were in Roseville yesterday for the International Plowing Match, and what a great plowing match it will be. Unfortunately, there are some things that we can't control and one is the weather. We all had fun getting stuck in places and pushing people out and giving people rides and whatever else.

But the weather's something we can't control. It's something like this government's energy policy: They can't control it. You'd almost think it's been raining on this energy policy for years. They are stuck. They have come up with ideas that don't work.

It was mentioned before that the bureaucracies are the biggest growth industry that this government has had in the province of Ontario for the last nine years. It worries me that a bill like this is just going to—it's kind of smoke and mirrors, and it's not going to accomplish anything.

We're very fortunate to live in this province. As we saw in the plowing match yesterday, all the exhibitors were in a good mood, even though the weather wasn't, because the economics in agriculture are having a bit of an upturn right now. There are some issues with droughts and everything else. But this energy policy that this government has conducted for the last nine years has been a bit of a drought too. It has just cost us way too much money.

I think this bill here is another bill to slow down some processes with public input and with public access to what's really going on in this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

M. Michael Mantha: Merci, monsieur le Président. Ça me ferait plaisir de tout le temps me lever en suivi des commentaires de ma collègue de Hamilton Mountain. Il y a beaucoup de points qu'elle nous a apportés à la Chambre aujourd'hui qu'on a entendus à travers de son discours, qui sont des points positifs et précis. J'aimerais toucher sur un peu de ces points.

Un des points qu'elle a faits c'est que la fusion essentielle de certains des départements et des niveaux va apporter un avantage aux résidents de l'Ontario. C'est certain; c'est un fait. On regarde à comment on peut toujours apporter des frais de récupération à nos gens, et puis c'est la nécessité de pourquoi on est ici.

Elle a aussi touché à où est-ce que ce problème-ci a commencé. Encore, je suis d'accord avec le commentaire qu'elle a fait. Où est-ce que ça a commencé? Ça a commencé avec le gouvernement conservateur pendant les journées de M. Harris. Et puis ça a été continué et, je dirais, jusqu'à un point, encouragé par le gouvernement présent libéral.

Le problème qu'on a avec cette pièce de législation, c'est là où ça ôte le processus où les gens des communautés et puis les gens qui ont un intérêt dans ce sujet peuvent porter question au processus. Comment est-ce qu'on peut poser la question pour faire certain qu'on s'en va dans la bonne direction? C'est vraiment le public et les gens qu'on a dans nos communautés qui peuvent poser ces questions-là. Peu importe si ce sont des questions difficiles à répondre. Il faut qu'on continue à les poser, ces questions-là, pour faire certain qu'on procède d'une bonne façon équitable qui sûrement va sauver de l'argent aux gens de l'Ontario. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Merci. The member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, this is a very simple bill. It's all about consolidation of bureaucracies. I am frankly amazed that the Progressive Conservatives want to continue to build government bureaucracy; this doesn't make any sense.

Let's look at a few examples where exactly this type of measure has taken place already: the merger of GO Transit and Metrolinx, two bureaucracies into one; another merger, Infrastructure Ontario and the Ontario Realty Corp., two bureaucracies into one.

What this bill proposes is very simple: It is the merger of the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator, two bureaucracies into one, thus providing for efficiency and savings in procurement and market operations, allowing both organizations to align contracts, to streamline the system, to reduce the burden on local utilities and, mostly, to save ratepayers money.

What a lot of people conveniently forget is that, over the nine years in which our government has served, the number of people working in the Ontario public service has trended down continuously. There are fewer people working in the Ontario public service now than there were nine years ago, and this particular bill will continue that. For example, Ontario is now completely out of the business of tax collection. We no longer collect taxes in this province.

What we're going to do with this bill, should it pass, is take two organizations that both deal in the planning of Ontario's electricity system and merge them. They should be merged. They do much of the same work, or they do complementary work. The two organizations serve the same consumer, and it would make a lot more sense if two organizations that serve the same consumer became the same organization and operated under the same roof.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Hamilton Mountain has two minutes to reply.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the members from Richmond Hill, Perth—Wellington, Algoma—Manitoulin and Mississauga—Streetsville.

As I said in my previous speech, this is a good thing. The merger is something that we campaigned on, that we agree with, to cut back on the administration costs, because we definitely know that we have way too many administration costs throughout our public services.

0940

The problem that we have over here and that needs to be amended, if and when it gets to committee, is public consultation. We need to make sure that there's accountability. We need to make sure that the minister has to take on that public consultation, that the residents of Ontario are included and informed about the process. That's the biggest thing. I mean, we know that merging them is going to be better at the end of the day for the ratepayers, because I know the ratepayers in my city, in my riding and I'm pretty sure across this whole province can't afford the hydro bills any longer. Every time they open that bill, it's a head drop. "Oh, gosh. How am I going to pull this one off?"—maybe not for everybody, but everybody struggles because, no matter what, that extra cost is coming out of something else. Whether it be their play money or whether it be their food money, that money has to come from somewhere.

That's the biggest issue. We need to make sure that people can afford their hydro bills. We're the only province in the entire country with rates at the price that we have. Why is that? Why is it that that happens quite often when we're standing here, in this House, speaking about different issues that go back onto the people of Ontario? We pay the highest rates, whether it be hydro, whether it be insurance. No matter what happens, we seem to always be the ones paying the highest. I think there's something wrong with that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 75 this morning. Let me first of all begin by saying I understand that people in the province want to see the government and opposition working together. I understand that was the case yesterday at the plowing match when the member from Whitby—Oshawa, a member of the opposition, happened to be stuck in the parking lot trying to leave the plowing match. I happened to see a picture on Facebook of the government doing some good work, finally. They were behind, in the mud, helping to push the member from Whitby—Oshawa out. I did confirm this with the Minister of Health—although she did say that the opposition are just spinning their wheels. But I'm pleased to see the members doing some good work around here finally.

Now back to Bill 75, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 75. It's an Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. Essentially, this bill is going to take two agencies, the IESO and the Ontario Power Authority, and create a new agency, the OESO. I think the government feels that this is going to save some money. They claim it's going to save some \$25 million—although I would wonder if, when they do this, there's going to be severance packages involved and what the cost of those might be. Perhaps they can tell us what their plan is for that. We know that when the HST was being brought in, I believe the opposition brought up the stories

about how the tax collectors who were working for the Ontario government and then switching to work for the federal government, without losing any work at all, received a severance package—I believe it was \$50,000 on average per worker—when in fact they didn't miss a day's work and continued to work and just switched offices. Hopefully, that's not going to be the case here.

Certainly, \$25 million is a lot of money, but in light of the money that's being spent on the energy sector—wasted, I would say, in the energy sector—it isn't really that much. I mean, you look at some of the money that's been spent by the government, most recently on the seat-saver plan, the moving or closing of the Mississauga power plant. We know that about \$190 million so far, approximately, has been disclosed for the cost of that move. Then the Oakville plant, of course, is a matter that's kind of before the House right now as the Minister of Energy, despite hours and hours at the estimates committee, has refused to disclose just how much that decision will have cost taxpayers.

In the opposition, our approach to the Ontario Power Authority has not been one to amalgamate it with and create some other new agency. We've said, let's do away with it; let's save all of the money involved with the Ontario Power Authority. That was our position in the last election, in the 2011 election. We say, let's not make it into some other alphabet soup; let's do away with it altogether.

When it started out, it was supposed to be a transitional agency. It was originally 15 people and now it's 235 people, with 87 who are making more than \$100,000 a year. The CEO makes some \$570,000 a year. Over \$300 million has been spent on it in total since it was created by the McGuinty government in 2005, so they've spent an awful lot of money on this agency. We say, let's do away with the whole thing.

It is one small factor in driving up electricity prices in the province of Ontario. There are many others, but the creation of this new bureaucracy is one factor in driving up electricity prices. That is probably the thing, in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, that I hear about on almost a daily basis: someone emailing somebody, calling somebody, dropping in at one of my constituency offices with some other version of concern for higher electricity prices. I have a phone call to make to a business in the Dwight area that is concerned about having security deposits and what it means for the cash flow of their business, and why is this necessary? But more often than not, it's just average people who are either mad about how much their electricity bill has gone up or concerned about their ability to pay their electricity bill.

For example, this is the most recent email I received, and I won't reveal the name, even though it starts out with "My name is.... I am a single mother of two school-age boys and I live in Bracebridge, Ontario. I am very concerned about my hydro bill. During the winter months, I have a higher hydro bill because I have to heat my house electrically." It goes on and on with details, but it concludes: "I am making every effort to reduce my hy-

dro bills, but with [the] security deposits they require and rising bills, it just seems to be getting more expensive." I would say to that writer that it doesn't seem to be getting more expensive; it is getting much more expensive.

Some of the contributing factors to that expense are, as mentioned, the decisions to cancel plants that were half-way through being built, like Mississauga, at \$190 million, and Oakville—who knows, but probably a lot more than that.

The government's Green Energy Act has added significant costs to the electricity system. This \$7-billion Samsung deal—of which, once again, we don't know a lot of the details—is definitely driving up costs. The Green Energy Act, with its feed-in tariff programs, where you're paying very much higher prices, higher-than-market prices, for solar power, for wind power, is very much driving up electricity prices. The Auditor General, in his report, suggests that 60% of the cost of a 46% increase in hydro bills over the next five years is going to be because of the Green Energy Act.

The other really negative effect of this environment of higher electricity prices—not just the effect on the average person trying to pay their electricity bill—is on business and jobs in this province. I'm the northern critic. In northern Ontario, there are huge hydro users in the resource sector, in mining, in forestry and pulp mills.

The most recent example of the negative effects of higher energy prices on jobs in northern Ontario is the Xstrata copper smelter in Timmins, Ontario. I was on the finance and economic affairs committee, touring Timmins and around northern Ontario. The mayor of Timmins, Tom Laughren, came to the committee, and his main point was to emphasize what it means for a community and the tax base to lose 700 jobs, and the effect on the city of Timmins to lose those 700 jobs. You might ask, where did those 700 jobs go? Well, the 700 jobs went across the border to Quebec, where they have cheaper energy prices.

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I can see I'm running out of time and I would just go back to Bill 75. I note that our critic, Mr. Fedeli, the member for Nipissing, in his comments said that this bill would enhance the "culture of secrecy" that this government is famous for. I think that's been borne out by the failure to disclose the Oakville plant information.

In the last minute I have, I would say simply that what the opposition would like to see is not just the amalgamation and the creation of one new bureaucracy, but a review of all the agencies, boards and commissions of government. There's some 630, and we need to review those; we need to have government that we can afford. We do need to reduce the size and cost of government. The government currently is, again this year, on line for a \$15-billion deficit. Their own adviser said that if they don't change their ways they are heading for a \$30-billion deficit by 2017. They've already doubled the debt in the province; they're spending \$1.9 million an hour more than they are bringing in in revenue. Action needs to be taken. This is one very, very small part of it that may not

accomplish anything. We need a much more comprehensive review.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: This legislation is again another half measure. In reviewing this legislation, it really made me wonder, what does the government have against doing something properly? I really believe that what we have right now is a rare opportunity with a minority government to put all the ideas together on all sides of the House and come up with something that will really benefit people living in Ontario. We can take these best ideas and we can come up with something that's solid—some solid, concrete legislation that will achieve its aims.

This legislation is really akin to a deck of cards: One puff and it just doesn't stand up. So it makes me wonder, why would the government do this if it's not going to do it properly and when the majority of the people in this House don't actually seem to support it? I've been listening to what people have been saying, and it just doesn't sound like the legislation goes far enough in a number of regards.

I respectfully suggest to the government that if they really need to, they could use the minority government as an excuse. They can still puff up their chest and maintain their partisan superiority, because if you listen to them, the Liberals are superior to the other two parties. But the people in Ontario don't care about the political grandstanding. When they open up their bills each and every month, they don't care. What they do care about is they care about their hydro bills.

What we could do—I think there are two considerations. There's the financial ramifications of doing this, and I respectfully suggest we're talking about merging two different bureaucracies, so let's take that one step further: Let's merge all seven bureaucracies. We can save a lot of money. As I mentioned last week, from merging those seven bureaucracies, we can save \$14 million in executive salaries alone. That's not talking about the people who are working on the ground; that's just the executives. The other thing: Let's tighten up the accountability. There are plenty of recent examples where we need to make sure that people have a voice, that we know what's going on. It's a sad day when even the people in this Legislature can't get the answers we seek.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Again, it's my pleasure to rise in this House and to speak to Bill 75 in response to my honourable colleagues from the other side of the aisle, the members from Parry Sound and Kenora–Rainy River.

I was talking about the work we did in the past nine years, since we came to office, to overhaul our electricity system. I'm just going to touch on one side of the work that we did that's in relation to conservation and green energy, as the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka referred to the Green Energy Act. In fact, the other members from the other side of the aisle voted against that bill, the Green Energy Act bill. But in terms of con-

servation, this is one of the areas that our government was very keen on.

Since 2005, we have saved 1,700 megawatts of power in terms of conservation. This is equivalent to removing half a million homes from the grid. It's a huge achievement, Mr. Speaker, and we have a plan until the year 2030, which is about 18 years from now, to save over 7,000 megawatts of electricity. This will be the equivalent of taking 2.4 million homes off the grid and saving an enormous amount of funds and money for the taxpayers.

Since we brought in the Green Energy Act, we asked the OPA and also the local distribution companies to come up with plans for saving up to—over, actually—1,300 megawatts of peak demand. They have come up with 20 initiatives in order to save electricity in our system, and they have been very successful. These savings, in terms of conservation of power, Mr. Speaker, are saving \$2.4 billion for the ratepayers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand today and comment on the very astute messaging that our esteemed colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka shared with us this morning around this absolutely ridiculous bill that is actually, at the end of the day, going to do nothing to address the very real issue that we have across Ontario.

We continue to have companies that are choosing to relocate outside of Ontario, as my colleague mentioned in his comments, and it absolutely is a drain on our economy. I just don't know when our current government is going to wake up and smell the proverbial roses. Saving 50 megawatts here or saving electricity over there is not doing what we're hearing from small business and manufacturing throughout this province.

I get contacted every week about the escalating costs of electricity and that Ontario, as we know it today, has become unaffordable, so we need to take bold steps. We need to have a government and leadership that shows some—can I say “guts”?—nerve to do the right things. I wish that our government of today would listen to the ideas that the PC Party is putting forward.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka is spot-on when he says we have to get rid of redundancy. People are asking me to give an example, and I will share with you, Speaker, that one of the first things a PC government would do under the leadership of Premier Tim Hudak is actually get rid of the OPA. It's nothing but an extra layer of bureaucracy that, as has been mentioned earlier this morning, ladens this province with extraordinarily high salaries that we can't afford, nor are they realistic in today's climate. We cannot support Bill 75.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, it's always interesting to come here and listen to the early morning debates. Let me just say a couple of things. Number one, there isn't one member in this House, on any side, who doesn't

want to retain jobs in the province of Ontario. That's number one. Number two, I would like to get a list from either the Conservatives or the New Democrats as to how many companies have left this province because of electricity rates. That's what we're talking about here: because of electricity rates. Let's just get a list of that. I don't think there are any. Companies may leave for a whole variety of different—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think the member from Huron-Bruce should not talk when I'm standing.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I know. I was—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're still talking. And I'd suggest to turn it down.

Stop the clock for a second.

I think we should tone it down a bit. I can't hear the Attorney General. Okay? You might not like what he says and he might not like what he hears, but I'd like to hear both of them, and I can't, so keep it down. Thank you.

Attorney General.

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Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker, for your great indulgence that you always show in this House on such a consistent basis.

Let's deal with another fallacy: that the cost of renewable energy has spiked our electricity bills. The reality is that renewable energy only contributes between about 4% to 5% of the total electricity supply in this province etc. Let's also not forget that what we're asking those proponents that come up with renewable energy projects is to come up with the capital money that's required for the solar installations, that's required for the wind turbine installations, that otherwise would have had to be paid by the OPA, which is basically the taxpayers and the ratepayers of this province.

Renewable energy is a good thing. It's good for the environment and it's good for the customer and consumer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka has two minutes.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to the member from Kenora-Rainy River, who talked about this Bill 75 being a half measure; the member from Richmond Hill, who came up with amazing facts to do with the Green Energy Act—I think we need one of those fact-checking systems to go over some of his comments; the member from Huron-Bruce, who talked about bold steps the opposition is taking; and the Attorney General, who wanted examples of how high energy costs have lost businesses in Ontario. Certainly, high energy costs were a factor with the 700 jobs at Xstrata Copper in Timmins that I did give as an example. He was talking about the supply of the Green Energy Act, and talking about 2% to 4%. Well, that's true. It's a 2% to 4% supply, but the Auditor General forecasts that that will mean 60% of the cost of a 46% increase in the next five years will be because of the Green Energy Act.

Mr. Speaker, I say we should all work together, as was demonstrated at the plowing match yesterday. The government could work together with us again—as they did in supporting the member for Whitby-Oshawa to get out of the mud yesterday—when the member from Whitby-Oshawa will have a private member's bill being debated this Thursday to create a select committee to develop a comprehensive development services strategy for Ontarians. I ask the government members to have a careful look at that select committee so that this Thursday, we can all work together to pass that private member's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's my pleasure to stand on behalf of the people of Davenport this morning and join the discussion on Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act. As we've now reached day 8 of discussion on this act, I'm sure all members are now very familiar with the positive aspects and some of the noteworthy shortcomings within this act.

Let me start off by saying that I support the idea of merging the two corporations, the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator, to form the Ontario Electricity System Operator. Our party has advocated for the consolidation of Ontario's fragmented hydro agency system to reduce waste and duplication, the costs of which we all know are passed on to Ontarians and contribute to people in our province paying some of the highest rates in Canada. So yes, we believe that the provincial government's intention to reduce waste and eliminate duplication by merging the two agencies is a small but positive start towards consolidating and streamlining our hydro agency system.

While the members of the government are very willing to log this very modest decrease in duplication and the \$25 million in savings, they have not been willing to discuss the significant changes to energy planning and procurement this bill will enact and the implications these changes have for government accountability and oversight.

In the province today, government consultation and oversight are in scarce supply. We see this with the power plant deals in Oakville and Mississauga and the hundreds of millions of dollars they will cost taxpayers. We see it in the way that a lack of community consultation and buy-in has created significant hurdles in the Green Energy Act and the way that it's divided our rural communities. Given the lessons being learned today, I'm surprised that the government is presenting this bill with glaring omissions in oversight and the elimination of independent energy planning and review.

As it currently stands, the Ontario Power Authority is mandated to create an integrated power system plan that provides a long-term plan for our energy needs and usage, how we will produce this energy and what supply mix we will use. Ministry directives and regulations currently determine what this plan should look like and how it should be conceived.

Current regulations state that in crafting the integrated power system plan, the Ontario Power Authority is to

consult “with consumers, distributors, generators, transmitters and other persons who have an interest in the electricity industry, in order to ensure that their priorities and views are considered in the development of the plan.”

The Ontario Power Authority is also “to ensure that safety, environmental protection and environmental sustainability are considered in developing this plan.” The Ontario Energy Board then has the power and duty to review the Ontario Power Authority’s integrated power system plan for economic prudence, cost effectiveness and regulatory compliance, including the regulations I just mentioned, consulting with stakeholders and developing plans that take into account environmental and safety factors.

These regulations provide important guidelines to the planning and review process. They broaden the scope of planning considerations, and they ensure that the public and other stakeholders can be involved in the planning process from the beginning. They also ensure that the public can participate in an independent review of our energy plans.

This is not to say that the integrated power system plan regulations have always been followed or that these regulations are ideal. Currently, environmental sustainability only has to be “considered” by the Ontario Power Authority in developing an integrated power system plan, which is a very far cry from a requirement for environmental protections or sustainability being reflected or integrated within the plan. And this is an even further cry from the full environmental assessment for integrated power system plans originally committed to and then reneged upon by this government.

Understanding these regulations is important for us to envision the type of changes Bill 75 will create, and for me and my colleagues, the changes Bill 75 will create raise a number of alarms. Under the proposed bill, the integrated power system plan would be replaced with energy plans created by the minister, not the newly formed Ontario Electricity System Operator. The only legislated requirement for consultation on these plans would be between the minister and the Ontario Energy Board, wherein the board is consulted on “the impact of the implementation of the energy plan on a consumer’s electricity bill and on methods of managing the impact.”

In Bill 75, there’s no mention of consultation with stakeholders in creating this energy plan, and we’ve lost any mention of creating a plan with safety or environmental sustainability in mind. Once the plan is completed, the minister refers the plan to the Ontario Energy Board for review of the estimated capital costs in the plan. The minister can also direct the board to review any other parts of the energy plan in the referral and “impose conditions as the minister considers appropriate.”

This is not an independent review. Essentially, the minister determines what the scope of this review will be, what questions will be asked and what will be answered. It seems highly unlikely that the board will be reviewing the stakeholder consultation or environmental consider-

ations in the creation of energy plans, because the planning process no longer mandates this inclusion. The new arrangement will deprive stakeholders of the ability to test, in a proceeding before the Ontario Energy Board, the government’s energy and procurement plans and the consequent effect of those plans on rates.

This should go without saying, but it seems that my colleagues and I are forced to make this case again and again this year: Ontarians deserve more accountability and more transparency from their government, not less. Why is the government setting the conditions for our long-term provincial energy plans to be created and reviewed in a bubble, away from the public, away from stakeholders and away from oversight? This is a dangerous situation, one we cannot support and one that we absolutely should and can avoid. I understand and appreciate that the government is trying to cut costs and waste in a sector that desperately needs restructuring and consolidation. We absolutely must bring coherence back into hydro planning, and the merger of these two corporations is a small but positive start.

The Harris-era experiment to privatize and deregulate Ontario’s electricity sector was a failure, with consequences we are still dealing with now. But in efforts to consolidate, let us not confuse bureaucratic waste with oversight mechanisms that are necessary to ensure accountability: public involvement, and simply smarter planning.

While members of the government have patted themselves on the back for small savings, I hope that they will look at the bill in its entirety and finally speak to the larger issues within the bill. Why have consultation with stakeholders and environmental considerations been removed from the planning and review process? What is the justification for not keeping the integrated power system plan within the new Ontario Electricity System Operator and turning it instead into a ministerial energy plan?

Are members of the government truly convinced that by limiting the scope of energy planning and independent review, by excluding public consultation and environmental considerations—do they honestly believe that this will result in smarter, more efficient energy policies? I can answer the last question for you, Speaker: It will not. Good policy will save us millions and it will help us avoid disasters that have plagued our energy sector.

I hope a member of the government will take time in the questions-and-comments period following to answer these questions and speak to these aspects of the bill.

Speaker, I’m going to end there in a second, but I’m going to take this moment to have the great pleasure to welcome the family and friends of Catherine Fife into the Legislature. We’re looking forward to Catherine joining us soon. Nice to see you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Could the member from Renfrew take his seat? The member from Renfrew, take your seat, please.

This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1011 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS FOR VAUGHAN AND KITCHENER–WATERLOO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Electoral Officer and laid upon the table certificates of the by-elections in the electoral districts of Vaughan and Kitchener–Waterloo.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): I have received a letter addressed as follows:

“Mrs. Deborah Deller

“Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

“Dear Mrs. Deller:

“A writ of election dated the 8th day of August, 2012, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Alfonso Ruggero, returning officer for the electoral district of Vaughan, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Vaughan in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Greg Sorbara who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Vaughan, has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Vaughan on the 6th day of September, 2012, Steven Del Duca has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election dated the 14th day of September, 2012, which is now lodged of record in my office.

“Yours sincerely

“Greg Essensa

“Chief Electoral Officer

“Toronto, September 17, 2012.”

I have a second letter addressed to

“Mrs. Deborah Deller

“Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

“Dear Mrs. Deller:

“A writ of election dated the 8th day of August, 2012, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Richard Findlay, returning officer for the electoral district of Kitchener–Waterloo, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Kitchener–Waterloo in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Elizabeth Witmer who, since her election as representative of the said electoral district of Kitchener–Waterloo, has resigned her seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Kitchener–Waterloo on the 6th day of September, 2012, Catherine Fife has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election dated the 14th day of September, 2012, which is now lodged of record in my office.

“Yours sincerely

“Greg Essensa

“Chief Electoral Officer

“Toronto, September 17, 2012.”

Mr. Del Duca was escorted into the House by Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Milloy.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Steven Del Duca, member-elect for the electoral district of Vaughan, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let the honourable member take his seat.

Ms. Fife was escorted into the House by Ms. Horwath and Mr. Bisson.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Catherine Fife, the member-elect for the electoral district of Kitchener–Waterloo, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims her right to take her seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let the honourable member take her seat.

ANNUAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid today upon the table the 2011-12 annual report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to introduce a few family and friends that I have with me here today on this special day: my wife, Utilia Amaral; my daughters, Talia and Grace; my parents, Ben and Margaret Del Duca; my siblings, Mark and Michael; and my sisters-in-law, Nicole and Amanda; and lots of other family and friends. Thank you everyone for being here today.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to welcome and introduce members of my family: my husband, Dale; kids, Aidan and Claire; my nephew Leo Shrimpton; and family and friends from across the province.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to introduce a couple of my constituents in the members' east gallery today: George and Emma Barron from Pembroke, here today for the first Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis Awareness Day at Queen's Park. George suffers from IPF and will be participating in the reception this evening to raise awareness of the disease to MPPs. Welcome, George and Emma.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to welcome George Habib, the CEO of the Ontario Lung Association, and Peter Glazier, the director of development of the Ontario Lung Association. They are here with a delegation to raise awareness about idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis.

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Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to welcome and introduce today to Queen's Park a resident of my riding, Jackie Bowick from Smith's Falls. Jackie suffers from

IPF and is here today to bring awareness of IPF to members of the Legislature.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise today to welcome a constituent of mine to the Legislature. Robert Alexander-Carew is here today on behalf of the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation to help raise awareness amongst all members. Please welcome him to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome a few of the folks from back home who attended the swearing-in ceremony this morning for the newest member: Ian McLean of the KW chamber of commerce, and Georgia Bolger, as well as Margaret Johnson and Lindi Fabi from the Waterloo region school board, Dianne Freeman from the city of Waterloo, and of course our journalist, Liz Monteiro from the KW Record. You look great up there, and I hope you continue to participate at Queen's Park.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to acknowledge in the House today Graham Rivers, who is my press secretary. It's his last day here at Queen's Park. He has brought his son Jericho to see what he has done here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I just want to introduce a constituent of mine from Thorndale. Rachel Ross is here visiting us today.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome Robert and Heather Davidson from my riding, the riding of Markham-Unionville. Robert is the founder and president of the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure for me to welcome Ruth Wright and her husband, Don, members of the Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis—or IPF—Awareness Day. They join us from Sarnia-Lambton today.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome the family of Ajax-Pickering's newest page, Katherine Parker, here today. Her Aunt Joyce and Uncle Chris are here. They are joining us in the Legislature to celebrate their niece, Katherine, becoming page captain today. Also in the west gallery, second row up, the gentleman in the grey shirt is her father, her dad John. We welcome them all here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee of the Victorian Legislative Assembly in Australia, led by committee Chairman Mr. Philip Davis. Please join me in giving them a warm welcome, and thank you very much for joining us.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. After basically nine years of runaway spending, we've seen the cost of the public service balloon from \$40 billion to now about \$60 billion, a 50% increase in wages and benefits

to the public service, done largely by giving out unaffordable pay and benefit increases that don't reflect private sector realities, and secondly they increased the size of government.

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm not going to argue with them. They added to public sector payrolls when the private sector reduced payrolls. It's out of balance.

Part of the equation, Premier, is an across-the-board wage freeze. We stand beside that. We stand behind it 100%. But the second aspect is, you also have to fix the underlying problems that got us here in the first place, to address your runaway spending and secondly to fix a broken Arbitration Act. Premier, will you support the bill standing under Mr. Wilson's name, the Ability to Pay Act, to fix the broken arbitration system?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague. I do want to draw his attention to some important facts. As has been said, we're all entitled to our own opinions but not our own facts, and there are some important facts we ought to give some consideration to.

We have the fewest civil servants per capita in the country. We have the lowest expenses per capita in the country, just so we're clear on that front. We do not apologize for hiring more doctors, more nurses, more teachers, more meat inspectors and more water inspectors. We did that because that serves the interests of Ontario families. We will not apologize for doing what is right for Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, it's sad that the Premier does not even show any kind of flicker of recognition of the damage he's done to the finances of the province of Ontario, where he's on track to tripling the provincial debt, heading towards a \$30-billion deficit.

He added on, sure, more health bureaucrats, more spin doctors, unneeded regional health bureaucracies in the LHINs. You know what, Premier? We simply can't afford it, and Mr. Wilson and the PC caucus are fully behind the Ability to Pay Act that fixes a broken arbitration system that has seen agreements out to public sector unions way beyond the ability of taxpayers to pay those bills. It is courageous legislation; it is ground-breaking legislation. It is what municipal leaders have asked for and what university and college leaders have asked for.

Premier, if you truly want to get at your runaway spending problem, will you stand up today and endorse our act, the Ability to Pay Act, to fix the broken arbitration system?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Stop the clock.

We are at a point again where I'm hearing talking going on from the same side as the questioner, and on this side, the same side as the answerer. I would ask all of us to refrain from comments on all sides, questioning and answering.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Ontarians, I think, could be forgiven for being a bit confused about the official opposition's position on this matter. Reforming the arbitration system was part of their platform. We put it in our budget. They then voted it out of our budget, Speaker, and now they say, once again, that they are interested in reforming the arbitration system in Ontario. So again, Ontarians could be forgiven for being a bit confused about the PC position when it comes to arbitration.

Speaker, we are prepared to work with the opposition. We have the intention of introducing new initiatives in the not-too-distant future and we would once again try to address arbitration on behalf of Ontarians. We look forward to their support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: We do see a continuation of the Premier speaking out of both sides of his mouth on the issue. I think that the time for bold leadership has arrived to undo the damage of the last nine years that have driven us into the deepest debt by far in the history of our province, that saw the size and costs of the civil service increase by 50%.

Premier, if you truly do believe that the amendments you brought forward in your budget bill were the right solution on ability to pay, can you tell me specifically what part of your budget bill—tell me the schedule and the section—dealt with ability to pay?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, there were specific schedules that were removed from the budget by the opposition. In fact, I'd refer them specifically to schedules 1, 22, 30, 52, 56 and 68. Those—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. That's not helpful.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Nor that. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the schedules removed by the opposition would have made arbitration more transparent, accountable and efficient. It would have required written submissions by both parties of arbitration, written rationales by the arbitrator that arbitration be delivered within a specific time frame, and in cases where a decision is not delivered within the time frame, the OLRB would issue the final award to the party. That represented real progress. They decided they would not support that, and that, frankly, is a pity. We're going to try again.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I think I actually did get an answer there. I asked the Premier specifically what section actually dealt with ability to pay and the Premier basically said none. He talked about written submissions upon request. Well, that's a no-brainer,

Speaker. Of course, there would be written submissions—not upon request; let's make it mandatory.

1050

Second, they had a time frame that was 12 months that was far too long. Then they brought forward amendments, to appease the third party, to move it to 16 months—far too long. We say it should be three months, and that's in our act.

Lastly, Premier, I'm going to ask you one more time, because I think the answer is no: Can you tell me specifically where in your legislation you addressed ability to pay? Or—just be honest—you did not do it in one—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Tim Hudak:—whatsoever.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it would be helpful to lift this up just a little bit and understand what it is that the official opposition position is.

They would seek to drive down wages in the province of Ontario. They would seek to break unions in the province of Ontario. That's their position; that's their approach. I understand that, I respect that, but I can't support it.

We have a different approach. We think we should be reaching ever higher in Ontario. We intend to invest more in our people, develop their skills and develop their education levels. We want the best jobs that pay the most money, so our families can enjoy the highest standard of living and have a great quality of life.

That's the difference between our government and the official opposition. They want to bring us down. We want to lift us up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's the clear difference: The Ontario PC caucus is on the side of taxpayers—hard-working middle-class families who are working harder every day, paying more and more taxes and getting less in return.

For nine years, sir, you drove spending through the roof. You say you're reaching higher. You're darn right you are. You increased the cost of government by 50% when the economy barely grew at all. You're reaching higher, all right: record levels of unemployment. You're reaching higher, all right: 300,000 people have lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector.

All we're saying is public sector agreements need to reflect the ability of hard-working families who are struggling to pay those bills. It's clear. It's simple. It's black and white. It's important across the province.

You refused to act on the ability to pay in your budget bill, so you're darn right we voted against it. We brought forward legislation that hits on 13 out of 13 Drummond recommendations. Will you stand up today, Premier, and say that enough is enough, that you'll support this bill and make sure taxpayers can afford the payments that you're giving up?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It won't come as a surprise to hear me say we will not be supporting the initiative put forward by my honourable colleague.

We believe in a thoughtful, balanced, responsible approach. We think it's important that we address the deficit over time, in a way that enables us to continue to make important investments in our schools and in our health care system, and to find ways to support the growth of business and the development of the economy at the same time.

But we do not seek to drive down wages. The approach that we have brought with respect to our public sector workers is to freeze wages over the course of two years. We think that's thoughtful, responsible and balanced. We choose not to let people go. We choose not to lay off Ontario public servants, in contrast to what they're doing in Ottawa, for example, where they're firing 18,000 civil servants. We think we should freeze wages, protect jobs and protect services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, there's nothing thoughtful, reasonable or balanced about your approach to throw money at every problem under the sun. You've taken us to record deficits. You're on course to tripling our debt. You don't seem to understand—or else maybe you do understand but you refuse to act on—a broken arbitration system.

Clearly, you did nothing in your budget bill—you've admitted that—on ability to pay. The Drummond commission, the economists they hired, gave 13 separate recommendations on arbitration. In their budget bill, Speaker, they hit on one, barely, still making written submissions optional.

Mr. Wilson's bill, the PC bill, hits on all 13: a bold, innovative approach to make sure that agreements in the public sector reflect private sector realities, that pay and benefits reflect the ability of taxpayers to pay those bills, and with fundamental reform to make sure we balance the books so we can create jobs in the province of Ontario again.

Premier, I'll ask you again: Will you support this bold bill that will help rein in spending and get our economy back on the right track again?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm being snowed under by paper here, Speaker.

I want to say to my honourable colleague that I would recommend to him that he take a look at the Drummond report. He will see that the commission found that the system should not be thrown out, the arbitration system, but it did need refinement. In particular, that's what we are addressing to make the system more transparent, accountable and efficient.

I believe my honourable colleague would take it a step too far. I think it takes us in a direction that would have us drive down wages. We have a different approach. We

think we should freeze wages for a couple of years. We think that's in keeping with family values and aspirations: Rather than driving down wages in Ontario, rather than firing civil servants, we find a way to get through this together. Let's freeze those wages, let's protect public sector jobs, and let's protect public services.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The Premier stated that he will disclose the details of a cancelled private power plant in Oakville when the government has reached a settlement. My question is simple: When exactly will that be?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, Speaker, I hope it's at the earliest opportunity. I understand we have really six full days during which the House leaders can meet on as many occasions as they deem to be appropriate to see if we can come to a resolution of this matter. I've said this several times now, and I know my honourable colleague will have heard it: The issue is not whether we release these documents; the only issue is when. Failing a resolution, then obviously we'll make those documents public in keeping with your ruling, Speaker. But again, I think it's incumbent now upon the House leaders to find a way forward together.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the government started backroom negotiations around this private power deal nearly two years ago. For two years the people of Ontario have been told, "We'll tell you the facts when we feel like it," and not a moment sooner.

If the Premier hasn't made it a priority to tell the people the facts yet, why should anybody believe that he has a plan to do so in the future?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I just want to repeat what I said last week, and of course the Premier has reiterated that we respect your ruling. I think the most notable part of your ruling was the fact that it identified the complexity of the situation and the need for all parties to work together to make sure that the desire of the committee to see these documents is met at the same time that we respect the fact that there are very sensitive negotiations going on and that we don't need to jeopardize these negotiations through the premature release of commercially sensitive information. I am confident that the other House leaders and myself will be able to work together to find a solution to this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier says he wants to share the information, but for two years, the government has been scrambling to hide the facts from the public. When we asked the Auditor General to investigate, the Premier would not back our request. When MPPs tried to give the auditor that power at committee, Liberal MPPs filibustered for three days straight, and

they spent another six days at committee fighting against the very disclosure that we are discussing right now. If the government isn't afraid of transparency around these private power deals, why have they worked so hard to hide the facts?

Hon. John Milloy: In response to the question, I can only quote the words of Jim McCarter, the Auditor General of Ontario and an officer of this Legislature. On September 5 in public accounts, he said the following: "My sense on the Oakville one"—meaning the Oakville project—"where it's currently in arbitration ... is that it could very well be that some of this information could be subject to client-solicitor privilege, or even if we were to get it"—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, they're heckling the Auditor General of Ontario, an officer of this House. He said, "... some of this information could be subject to client-solicitor privilege, or even if we were to get it, in my opinion"—the opinion of the Auditor General—"it could be damaging to the province's negotiating position." The challenge that the House leaders have is to balance the right of the committee to see these documents as well as protecting the province's negotiating position. That is the approach that we're taking.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Here's what people see: The government signed private power deals, and the Liberal campaign team cancelled them. Not only are families who are already struggling with electricity bills going to pay the cost of that, but they're not even entitled to the details. Does the Premier understand why this is a problem for people?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In the matter of the Mississauga gas plant, when that matter had been resolved through negotiations between parties, we made that documentation public. What we're doing now, of course, is waiting for the House leaders to come together on the matter of the Oakville gas plant, to see if we might come to a resolution there with respect to the appropriate timing for release of these documents. We continue to look forward to the outcome of that process, Speaker. I would encourage the House leaders from the three parties to come to this with a sense of perspective, a sense of goodwill and a sense of responsibility in terms of our accountability to the greater public interest. If we can do that, and if we come to that undertaking with those sentiments in mind, I know that we can find a solution working together.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, if the Premier was sincere about sharing the facts with the public, he could have done so by now. He could have done so long ago. Instead, we've seen the same old cynical politics that this Premier once railed against. He promised that private

power deals would make electricity more affordable in the province of Ontario. They haven't. He promised that the deals would be transparent. They're not. He promised to stop cynical political games, and he is the one now playing them. The public has been waiting for two years for some basic information about how the Premier spent their money. When does he think that they should be able to get their answers, Speaker?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the leader of the third party, and indeed all members, to review your ruling and to review the facts that were made at the estimates committee, where I think it was made very clear that there are ongoing, commercially sensitive negotiations related to the Oakville power plant. Although we certainly acknowledge the right of the committee to see these documents, we also want to protect the interests of Ontario taxpayers. The challenge that you have given to the three House leaders is to find a way to balance it. We still have several days left until the deadline, and I'm confident that in working together, we can find a way to balance those interests.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, how anybody in this chamber could keep a straight face while that government says they're trying to protect the interests of the taxpayers is beyond me. Again, here's what people see: The Premier, who came to power 10 years ago promising not to put politics over principle, made a cynical move to save a couple of seats and stuck the public with the bill. The Premier says that we should trust him now. Why doesn't he actually start earning that trust by coming clean with the public?

Hon. John Milloy: The Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, has acknowledged the fact that there could be aspects of this document that could be damaging to the province's negotiating position. The government took a position in terms of the Mississauga and the Oakville plants, one which was supported by both opposition parties. We are now in the process of finalizing the negotiations and we are trying to find a balance between protecting the interests of the taxpayers and the rights, which we acknowledge, of the committee to see these documents. Again, Mr. Speaker, I am confident, based on the ruling and the direction that you've given us, that the three House leaders will find a way to move forward in this matter.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Premier. Speaker, the Premier has recently shown disdain for this House and for your authority. In the media he has repeatedly expressed his intention to defy your ruling on the Minister of Energy's breach of privilege and to thumb his nose at the people of Ontario. Despite the Liberals' spin, they are solely to blame for the hundreds of millions

of dollars that they've squandered on the Mississauga gas plant just to save a couple of Liberal seats.

The Premier is used to putting his own political interests ahead of the interests of Ontario taxpayers. Will he get used to the idea of accountability as well, and table those documents we seek today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think if there's anyone who is undermining your ruling, it is the member opposite from Cambridge. The fact of the matter is, your ruling acknowledged the fact that this was a complex situation, acknowledged the fact that there were competing interests, and charged the House leaders to come to the table in good faith and find a way to move forward. That is the approach that the government is taking, that is the approach I'm taking as House leader, and I challenge the member and his party and his House leader to come to the table with that same element of good faith, to realize that there are competing interests in what the Auditor General himself acknowledges is a very complex situation which could put taxpayers' dollars at risk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, this question is for the Premier to answer. Quit side-stepping, Premier. Take responsibility; take ownership. This isn't Don Guy's fault. This isn't Greg Sorbara's fault. This isn't the Minister of Energy's fault. This isn't the government House leader's fault. This is your fault; it's yours.

I know the Premier is getting tired in his job, and we get that sense over here—that he doesn't want to answer sensitive questions. But it's still the Premier who has to take ownership. If the Premier won't acknowledge that his selfish political interests are what guided his decision-making and not the interests of Ontarians, will he at least put the province first? Release those documents today without delay.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let me quote from Hansard—members will want to hear this. The member from Halton, during petitions, stood up and said, "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them." The member from Halton in a press release, September 14, 2010: "Minister, will you move?"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Some people are defying me now.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member from Halton in a press release, September 14, 2010: "Minister, will you move the Oakville power plant?... I am asking the minister to consider moving this plant."

But you know, it doesn't stop with the Progressive Conservatives. The member from Hamilton Centre, as she was at that point, October 18, 2010: "New Democrats actually have thought for a long time that that plant should never have been built and we've said so."

JOB CREATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. People in Kitchener–Waterloo are concerned with whether the job they have today will be there tomorrow. They're worried about whether their kids will have jobs when they finish school.

Andrea Horwath has a plan to create well-paid jobs in Ontario through the job creation tax credits. It's a simple plan: You create a job, you get a tax credit. Will the government commit right here to working with Andrea Horwath and New Democrats and implement a job creation tax credit now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to take the opportunity, Speaker, to personally congratulate the newly elected member, to welcome her to this Legislature and wish her the very best. I know she's here today with her family. They're very proud of her, and well they should be.

I know that she has as a personal priority, near and dear to her own heart, education. We think that the foundation for a strong and dynamic economy that creates great jobs is to invest in our people by giving them the necessary skills and educational levels. I know my honourable colleague will want to acknowledge the great work that we've done in terms of building that foundation of an extraordinarily competitive workforce all the way from full-day kindergarten through post-graduate work, through apprenticeship programs, through our Second Career program as well. We will continue to find ways to invest in our people because the best people get the best jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, workers at Schneiders in Kitchener know their plant is moving, and lots of the folks who worked at Kitchener Frame, Ornamental Mouldings or other manufacturers are still looking for work.

But Kitchener–Waterloo is full of innovators and hard workers. A job creation tax credit is targeted to the job creators and the companies investing in Kitchener–Waterloo and across Ontario. This government's blank cheques to already profitable businesses have created what Mark Carney, the governor of the Bank of Canada, calls "dead money."

Will the government commit today to Andrea Horwath's plan to create a job creation tax credit?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again, I welcome the question and the priority my honourable colleague is placing on the need for jobs in her community and indeed throughout the province.

I think it is important to acknowledge that overall we are moving in the right direction. We have created 325,000 jobs since the recession. Overwhelmingly, those are good, full-time, well-paying jobs. By way of perspective, the US has recovered 45% of their jobs, the UK has recovered about 71% of their jobs and we've recovered about 125% of our jobs. So, clearly we're going

in the right direction. Obviously there's more to do. We look forward to working with the honourable colleague opposite and her party, as well as the official opposition, in this regard.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted that my first-ever question here in this chamber is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care regarding the Vaughan hospital. My recent campaign platform had a focus on ensuring that Vaughan residents continue to have access to a strong and top-quality health care system locally. Vaughan has been one of the fastest-growing areas in Canada over the last decade, and we are home to a significant number of both young families and seniors. As a result, folks in Vaughan need to be able to access quality health care close to home. They need to be assured that in their time of need, there will always be high-quality health care nearby. More to the point, we need our own hospital. Vaughan is one of the most populous areas here in Ontario that still doesn't have a hospital.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: When will Vaughan's hospital become a reality for our residents?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know that all members in this House join me in congratulating the new member on his election victory, and we welcome him to this wonderful, wonderful place, Speaker. I know that his strong work ethic and his collaborative approach will serve his constituents well.

I am very pleased to confirm that Vaughan's new hospital has been approved and it is moving forward. Here's what we're going to do in Vaughan: Planning is under way now for state-of-the-art emergency services; new, modern surgical services and operating rooms; medical in-patient and intensive care beds; advanced diagnostic imaging; and specialized outpatient services that may include oncology, cardiac, eye and diabetes care. Eighty per cent of the rooms will be single rooms, because we're committed to reducing infection rates. This project is scheduled to begin in 2014-15, and I know the new member will make sure we keep on track.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Until the new time that the hospital is built, I need to make sure that my constituents continue to have access to health care services in a timely fashion. This includes getting access to more family doctors and other health care services that they need. Because Vaughan has such a large population of seniors, as well as young families, having health care close to home is incredibly important.

Through you, Speaker, to the minister: How will you ensure that these services will be accessible to Vaughan residents so that they have the health care that they need until the hospital is built?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member is absolutely right—astute, as we would expect. He represents a growing, thriving part of this province, and we are committed

to making sure that all residents, young and old and in between, have access to the health care that they need. Ninety-two per cent of residents now have a family doctor, and there are doctors there taking new patients today. There's been a 42% increase in the number of doctors—382 more than when we took office in 2003. Health Care Connect connects patients looking for doctors with doctors; 96% of those with complex conditions have been attached to a primary health physician. We're continuing to support Mackenzie Health. It is leading the development of the Vaughan hospital. As they have responded to the needs of their community, we have responded, increasing their funding by 72%.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Premier, you announced the cancellation of the Oakville power plant two years ago. We have been waiting all this time for you to tell us what you're spending to save a Liberal seat. The members of the estimates committee have demanded these documents. The Speaker has spoken, yet you're defiant.

We say to you, no more games, no more hiding, no more stalling; deliver those documents now, and we insist they be unedited and unredacted. Ontarians deserve to know.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, what the member said is not true. You have made a ruling which acknowledges the complexity of the situation, that we are, in effect—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm listening carefully to all of the comments that are being made, and some of them are going down a road that I feel a little bit uneasy about. In this case, I would ask that you don't say indirectly what you can't say directly. I caution the member on how he responds, in that manner.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the honourable member, and indeed all members of the House, of your ruling. Your ruling acknowledged the complexity of the situation, and indeed the debate and discussion at the estimates committee acknowledged the fact that we are talking about a case where there are sensitive commercial interests at work, and at the same time we need to balance that with the committee's absolute right to produce the documents.

What your ruling said, Mr. Speaker, is that the three House leaders should meet and find a way to balance these interests. The government is firmly of the view that we can find a way forward through co-operation with all the parties.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Again to the Premier: Premier, you and your ministers aren't hiding commercially sensitive materials; you're hiding Liberal-sensitive materials. Let's be fair about that. And after two years of hiding these, there must be something awful in those documents.

On July 11, the member from Richmond Hill excused the energy minister's contemptuous act, saying, "I think this whole motion is frivolous"—hundreds of millions of dollars, frivolous. Premier, you obviously agree with him.

The Speaker has spoken. You've been called out on the seat-saver program. Will you uphold the rights, the powers and the privileges of the members of this House and deliver those documents today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think there are two facts to put on the table. The first is that we are complying with your ruling. We are attempting to work with the House leaders to find a way forward. The second, Mr. Speaker, is that the honourable member should consider his question in light of what the Auditor General said on September 5—and I'll remind members again: "My sense on the Oakville one, where it's currently in arbitration ... some of this information could be subject to client-solicitor privilege," and more importantly, "or even if we were to get it, in my opinion"—the opinion of the Auditor General of Ontario—"it could be damaging to the province's negotiating position."

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General acknowledges the complexity of this situation, you acknowledge the complexity of this situation, and we're going to work to find a way forward to make sure that we balance both of these issues.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Ontarians are horrified by the senseless death of Jayesh Prajapati, a Toronto gas station attendant who was tragically killed after the theft of \$112 worth of gas. Since his senseless death, his family has been raising concerns, asking whether he was concerned about the cost of stolen gas from his paycheque and whether that led him to take the tragic actions that led to his death.

What is this government doing to enforce its own Employment Standards Act?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question. I, too, was saddened and shocked to learn of this incident, and my thoughts are with the family of this gentleman, who lost his life in such a tragic and unfortunate way. As the Premier said earlier this week, we owe it to the family to take a long, hard look at what lessons we might draw from this incident.

I'd like to acknowledge the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, who has expressed his interest to assist with finding a solution to the "gas-and-dash" issue. We have a shared interest in ensuring that this doesn't happen again, and I look forward to working with him and other members of the House on this issue.

In the meantime, the Ministry of Labour has begun a health and safety investigation into this workplace fatal-

ity. At the same time, my ministry is also looking into whether or not there were any employment standards violations taking place at the station.

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Any employee who feels that their employer has made deductions that contravene the ESA may file a claim with the ministry. The ministry does take enforcement of the ESA very seriously and investigates all claims.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The ministry's own website states that a deduction from wages is not allowed if there is lost or stolen property; for example, if customers leave without paying the bill. That seems pretty clear to me and to us on this side of the House.

Will this government start enforcing its own employment standards laws or are we going to see more tragic deaths, such as Jayesh Prajapati's?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Let me be clear: The Employment Standards Act states it is illegal for an employer to dock an employee's wages for the company's lost or stolen property. That means that if a patron at a gas station gases and dashes, the employee cannot be docked wages for the loss to the company.

There are very many vulnerable workers across Ontario, we need to protect those individuals, and gas station attendants are included in that group. One of the risks we need to address is this issue. We need to be clear in that regard and we need to do more to protect the health and safety of employees.

A similar incident occurred in 2011, and my ministry looked into what could be done to prevent this kind of workplace fatality from happening in the future. At that time, the ministry consulted with stakeholders in other jurisdictions. What we learned from that was there are significant concerns from stakeholders about the feasibility of the pay-at-the-pump laws and, further, other jurisdictions have not seen the expected results or uptake after passing the legislation.

We're going to work with our stakeholders to prevent tragic events like this from happening again, and I look forward to working with the member from Eglinton-Lawrence in finding a solution.

ARBITRATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question this morning is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, like you, I have read the news over the past few months and I've noticed a number of stories coming out all over the province on interest arbitration. It seems municipalities are concerned about the transparency and the timeliness of arbitration decisions. I imagine this was an issue that was brought up to you at AMO in August in your delegations with many municipalities.

Lately, I've been hearing some rumblings from the official opposition on interest arbitration through a private member's bill. Minister, I also like to follow what goes on inside the Legislature and in committee. I do believe our government put forward a series of very respon-

sible reforms to six statutes governing interest arbitration in the budget last spring.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you give us a status update on what our government has done in terms of interest arbitration?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you for the question. Our government actually listened to municipalities from across Ontario that brought forward recommendations with regard to interest arbitration, and in our spring budget, we proposed some interest arbitration reforms that would have increased accountability, transparency and timeliness within the interest arbitration system.

But, last spring, when it came time to vote on these proposed changes, the official opposition elected to join forces with the third party and vote them down. That tells me they're confused on this issue. The leader of the official opposition seems to constantly say one thing and do another. Judging by the reaction that I heard recently at AMO, their inconsistency on this file is clearly noticed by municipal leaders from across the province.

This is the second private member's bill that they've brought forward on interest arbitration, and I'm really puzzled why their labour critic isn't the one speaking to this issue anymore. The fact remains: They can introduce all the private members' bills—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: —they want, but when they had the chance to take real action—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Paul Miller: Time.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: —and vote on changes to help municipalities, they failed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Two observations: I'm beginning to hear some comments through the interjections that are very close to being very personal in nature, and I'd like to remind you that it's not something that I endorse.

Also, I don't need to be reminded of the clock; I'm on top of that. For those who are worried about it, everyone will do their best to stop when I say, "Thank you."

Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Minister, thank you very much for that insightful and thoughtful response. But, Minister, I'm confused, and municipalities across Ontario are confused. It seems to me like the reforms that the official opposition are asking for are very similar to the ones that we proposed in the spring. So, Minister, based on what you've said, the official opposition is teaming up with the third party to scrap our reforms that they were showing no support for. To me, it seemed then, and I'm reminded now, that despite campaigning on interest arbitration reform and making the same promise to municipalities at multiple AMO conferences, the leader of the official opposition and his party are inconsistent and extremely confused on this issue.

Speaker, through you to the minister, could you please provide some clarification of what the official opposition and Changebook is all about?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will make this observation: that if the question had been different, there may not have been concern from me. Talk about the issues at hand from the government policy. I will provide for the minister to talk about government policy in the answer.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Leader of the Opposition's speech this summer at the AMO conference. I heard him say that he wanted tight timelines for arbitrators to issue their decisions. I heard him say he wanted written decisions—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You need to hear the answer. The member from Leeds–Grenville will come to order. I'm trying to hear the answer to ensure that she's doing what I asked her to do, and the member from Leeds–Grenville will work himself towards a warning if he says another word.

Minister.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, I also heard the Leader of the Opposition say he wanted rewards that reflect local budget conditions. These seem like entirely reasonable proposals that sound very familiar. I think I heard those ideas before because they were included in those changes in our budget last spring. The curious thing is that despite the Leader of the Opposition's insistence that he wants these changes, when he had the opportunity to support those amendments, he voted against them. Mr. Speaker, we want increased accountability, we want to increase transparency, and we want proposed timelines within the interest arbitration system. It's puzzling that, when the official opposition votes against interest arbitration, that's what they campaigned on before.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier, and I respectfully request that he answer it. The Minister of Energy has been found in breach of the rights and privileges bestowed upon all of us as members of this Legislature. This is made worse by the government's refusal to accept responsibility for saddling Ontarians with hundreds of millions of dollars in new debt. In cancelling the two power plants, the Liberal government put its own selfish political interests ahead of Ontarians'. It is now proceeding to obstruct the work of this House to hide the true cost of its actions.

I ask the Premier, when can we expect him to accept responsibility to this House and own up to the full cost of the Liberal seat-saver program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I'm a little disappointed by that question. I have a great deal of respect for the honourable member. The honourable member knows that you made a ruling in this House several days ago in which you acknowledged the complexity of the situation and asked the three House leaders to sit down and find a way forward. That is what's happening

right now, Mr. Speaker. We are not defying any ruling by the Speaker. In fact, we're following the rules coming forward.

As to the latter part of the question about the reasons why we were hesitant at the estimates committee in making these documents move forward, I refer him again to what the Auditor General, an officer of this House, said when he talked about the Oakville project: Releasing these documents, "in my opinion ... could be damaging to the province's negotiating position," which reinforces the fact that this is a complex situation which requires all three House leaders to sit down in a spirit of co-operation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Back to the Premier because, on this one, the buck stops with him. I'm compelled to remind the Premier that on October 11, 1995, in this House, he offered the following advice: "Your accountability, like that for all of us here, is to all Ontarians, including those who happen to be taxpayers." After nine years in government, it appears as though the Premier has disavowed the principle he espoused 17 years ago. He now leads a government that flouts the standing orders, breaks the Legislative Assembly Act, ignores the authority of the Speaker and has shown contempt for this House.

So I ask the Premier, how does he rationalize what he said in 1995 with what he's doing today? When will he own up to what he did and table the documents?

1130

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, if anyone is defying a ruling by you in terms of the release of these documents, it's the opposition member in the question that he has asked today. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, you have made a ruling that was clear. Your ruling has given the House leaders until next Monday at 6 o'clock to come up with a way to release these documents, and at the same time also respect the fact that there are some sensitive commercial interests that have been recognized by the Auditor General of Ontario. That was your ruling. We want to comply with that ruling, and we look forward to working with the opposition parties to find a way forward.

I know that the honourable member would never want to leave the impression that—your ruling was nothing short of a call on all parties to sit down and find a way to move forward, based on the complexity of the situation.

HUNTING AND FISHING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Ontarians are losing jobs, and just yesterday your government encouraged us to spend more on local products. Yet the MNR is not practising what its own government is preaching, by outsourcing jobs to the United States while reducing programs and cutting staff levels.

A company in Tennessee now handles Outdoors Cards and fishing licences for Ontario. The moose tag draw happens in Tennessee. Deer and other big-game licence applications also have to go through Tennessee.

Minister, how many other jobs are Ontarians missing out on because they are being contracted to other countries?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: There are so many inaccuracies in that, I don't know where to begin, other than to say that we have rolled out a new, modern system that makes it easier for anglers and hunters to get their licences. It offers more options for renewing licences online. You do it from your home; you can do it by phone.

Active Outdoors, from Tennessee, was awarded the contract in a fair procurement manner. Certainly, all I can tell you is that since December, more than two million licences have been issued to people in the province of Ontario. Currently, all 69 ServiceOntario locations and hundreds of other private sector locations are also issuing those licences by working through the company. The fact is, this has been helpful in terms of the fishing and hunting community.

Yes, I'll acknowledge that there were some glitches in the process of moving through it, but it is now moving slowly and certainly in terms of jobs. The Outdoors Cards centre in Peterborough continues to be the focus point for us in terms of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Minister, hunting season is here. We've heard from a number of hunters who have told us they've noticed a change to the automated response when they call the licensing and draw application 1-800 number. The Ministry of Natural Resources now seems to be going out of its way to show frustrated hunters that their concerns about the storage of their private information will be fielded in Peterborough by the Ontario Outdoors Card team. Yet the system is still in Tennessee, still outsourced to the United States and still subject to the laws of the jurisdiction where it is sourced, regardless of any contractual obligations imposed by the government upon the private company.

Minister, won't you admit that outsourcing is not the right thing to do? It costs taxpayers more money, it causes privacy concerns and it's taking good jobs away from Ontarians.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm actually rather surprised that the member would bring up that issue, particularly as she knows full well that Ontario's privacy commissioner has made it very, very clear that indeed the private information of Ontarians is absolutely safe.

We've got an ironclad contract with the company. The privacy commissioner expressed real confidence in the work we're doing on ensuring that privacy remains secure. We've implemented all the recommendations put forth by the privacy commissioner in her report.

I think I need to actually quote what the privacy commissioner said to us when this issue first surfaced in the spring. She said, "There's a very tight contract. There are very tight service provisions.... And there's an audit provision so that their use of data will be carefully audited.... I have no concerns about that whatsoever."

This continues to be an important issue to us. We'll always be sure that we protect the privacy of Ontarians, and indeed that is the case.

EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. As you know, Speaker, this House recently passed Bill 11, Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act, 2012, which makes permanent the eastern Ontario development fund, or the EODF. Since 2008, when the program began, the EODF has seen tremendous success in leveraging private sector investment and creating jobs in eastern Ontario economies.

With this track record, the government has received a range of support from municipal leaders across the province for Bill 11 and the economic benefit they see for their communities. In fact, the city of Ottawa recently passed a motion calling for all provincial parties to support this bill, and it's a shame that the official opposition did not.

The city council is also requesting that the boundaries for the EODF include both the urban and rural parts of Ottawa, which was not the case under the previous program.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: When will the boundaries be determined, and will he expand them to include all of Ottawa?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We are aware of the motion from Ottawa city council, and of course we take their request seriously. We're giving it proper consideration as we determine what the parameters for the eastern Ontario development fund and southwestern Ontario development fund will be.

Speaker, the eastern Ontario development fund has been a great success. To date, we've invested \$57.7 million to leverage \$595 million of private sector investment. That's over a 10-to-1 private sector leverage ratio. This fund has created and retained over 13,200 jobs in eastern Ontario, and we plan to apply that success, the success we've seen in eastern Ontario, to southwestern Ontario's development fund. We're working hard to get these programs up and running, get the funds flowing to communities and worthy businesses, and create much-needed jobs in eastern and southwestern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm glad to know that the investment we have made in this program has proven to be such a success, and I sincerely hope that the minister will strongly consider the request of the city of Ottawa to include all of Ottawa within the parameters of the fund. As the MPP for Ottawa Centre, I hope that my constituents and businesses will have the same opportunity to grow our regional economy and create jobs that have been available outside of Ottawa since 2008. It's especially imperative given the thousands of jobs that are being lost in Ottawa because of the job cuts that are taking place by the federal government.

I find it passing strange that two of my colleagues from Ottawa on the opposite side of the House have remained silent on this issue and in fact voted against this measure, given that their communities benefit from the EODF.

Speaker, through you back to the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation: Why did it take so long to pass Bill 11?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The fact is, it really didn't need to take this long, and it shouldn't have. This legislation was introduced for third reading at the beginning of May. It had a total of seven and a half hours of debate. It was one thing for the PCs to oppose the fund—they have that right—but it was quite another for them to deliberately delay this money. Money that could have been flowing into eastern Ontario and southwestern Ontario this summer was delayed needlessly. Even the opposition members from the Ottawa region failed to speak out when they should have for jobs in their community.

I'm pleased, after the PCs got hammered all summer long in their ridings on this, that they finally decided to give up their needless delay. I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker: We're committed to flowing these funds as quickly as we possibly can. We know the communities want the jobs. We know the communities need the jobs. We're going to get on it as quickly as we can, in spite of the opposition from the PCs.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, I'm sure you remember that the estimates committee passed a motion on July 19 ordering you to release all documents relating to eHealth contracts, expenses, invoices and correspondence from 2009 to 2012. But here we are, two months after the motion was passed, and you still haven't responded to the committee or the clerk.

Minister, clearly there's a pattern emerging here. Your government continues to hide critical information from Ontarians, even at the risk of being found in contempt of this House. Minister, I have to ask: Are you going to follow in the footsteps of the energy minister and block the release of these documents, or will you do the right thing today and disclose the information on your botched eHealth program?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I can assure you that we're working very hard to refer the thousands of pages of documents—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Should a member, at this particular moment—and I haven't quite figured it out—whose identity I don't really know, like to withdraw—

Mr. Frank Klees: I'll do that, sir. I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm very impressed.
Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you. What I can say, Speaker, is that I do support the decision by eHealth Ontario to cancel the diabetes registry contract. This is a decision that saves taxpayers \$46 million. I think it is the right decision.

I can assure you, Speaker, though, that we remain committed to supporting people with diabetes, making sure they get the care they need. I look forward to the supplementary.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the minister: I'm sure you're working hard, but again you continue to ignore the clerk here. I'm just not sure what's taking so long with these documents. I do want to make it clear that, in committee, I want a paper copy, not an electronic copy, because let's be honest: We all know how long it takes the Liberal government to deliver electronic records here in the province of Ontario.

Minister, seeing that the Liberal government will stop at nothing to prevent the release of critical information to Ontarians—in fact, the energy minister has shown that he's even willing to risk being found in contempt of this House to stop the release of documents relating to the Liberal seat-saver decision to cancel the power plants in Mississauga and Oakville—I have a simple question: Will you release the eHealth documents requested by the estimates committee today, or are you willing to risk being found in contempt of this House like the Minister of Energy has been?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member opposite would be very interested in knowing, Speaker, that we've got 9,000 doctors now with electronic medical records. The most up-to-date version of those records collects 30 different indicators related to diabetes care.

We're moving forward with electronic medical records. We're very, very proud of the progress. We're proud of the increasing number of physicians who are getting electronic medical records, and we're also proud of the advancements in the EMR package so that doctors increasingly will have all the information they need to provide the highest possible quality care to their patients with diabetes and with other conditions.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety. Minister, the situation at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre has been escalating. It took two inquests into conditions at this facility for the ministry to introduce plans for around-the-clock nursing, which is not scheduled to start until 2013, while lives are at stake now.

Yet the facility still faces severe overcrowding problems. Guards are not able to monitor inmates from the ranges, and assaults continue to rise. Conditions have deteriorated to the point that inmates have been forced to hire lawyers in hopes of dealing with these safety issues. When will the minister do her duty and bring the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre up to basic standards?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very proud of what we have done in the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. I know that there have been issues at this detention facility, and I've worked very closely with the staff there, the

staff at the ministry and community leaders to make sure that this situation has been redressed.

We have developed an action plan to redress the situation, and yesterday I was very happy to announce that we will implement the recommendations from the coroner in two of the investigations, and we will now have 24-hour nursing service at this detention centre.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Minister, two weeks ago the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre was under another lockdown after the staff issued a refusal to work because of ongoing unsafe conditions. The inmates remained on lockdown for an extended period of time, and staff did not feel safe to enter and perform searches, adding stress and uncertainty to an already tense situation.

We know that inquests into the facility have called for increased staffing levels, yet the minister has refused to address the recommendations of those inquests by proposing to add cameras rather than staff. Will the minister give correctional workers the respect they deserve and give them the tools to perform their jobs safely and properly?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I have invited the member of the opposition to visit that detention centre, and as I said, we're working very closely. We always review the staff complement in our detention centres, in our jails, in Ontario. Our main objective is to make sure that both the workers and the inmates are very safe—that the workers are very safe in their workplace, and the inmates also. We have an action plan that was put together, and we will continue to implement it. This was from recommendations from both the health and safety committee and the staff.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question period is over, and there are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Shurman: In the west members' gallery is my friend Pino Didiano, who is a constituent in Thornhill and also a businessman in the riding of Vaughan. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guest.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. Peter Shurman: Shana Tova, Happy New Year. Today is the first day of the year 5773 in the Hebrew calendar. It is New Year's Day here in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, so happy new year.

Over the past several days, the Jewish community has celebrated the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah to welcome the new year.

My riding of Thornhill, as everyone knows, is home to the largest Jewish community in Ontario and perhaps the largest in Canada. It is a strong and tightly knit community that has contributed greatly to Ontario's growth and prosperity.

Rosh Hashanah brings our community even closer together. It is a time to take a pause out of our hectic lives and spend time with family, friends and neighbours and to reconnect with our faith.

I know that as families in Thornhill, in Ontario and across Canada celebrated this important holiday, their thoughts, as mine, were also with family and friends who are observing these High Holy Days in Israel. In these uncertain and turbulent times in the Middle East, the High Holy Days are an important opportunity to look forward to our future with renewed optimism and determination and to work towards stability in that region.

Today, as we take our first steps into this new year, I wish my constituents and the entire Jewish community a very happy and sweet new year, filled with peace, health, hope and promise.

L'Shana Tova Umetukah.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shalom.

CASINOS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, the people of Toronto-Danforth overwhelmingly reject any proposal to locate a casino in their community, in the port lands. A majority reject any new casino on Toronto's waterfront. Today, I'm tabling a stack of letters and emails from my constituents, voicing their opposition to the McGuinty government's gambling plans.

Over the summer, I've had the opportunity to talk to many residents in my riding. They see a proposal that will increase addiction problems and increase crime, a proposal that will take business from our local main streets and cause even more traffic problems in the south end of Toronto-Danforth.

There are good plans in place to develop the port lands in a way that will boost the film industry and reinvigorate our waterfront. A new casino will damage those plans, damage our community and must be rejected.

TELEMEDICINE

Mrs. Liz Sandals: On Monday, I was pleased to participate in an announcement at St. Joseph's Health Centre in Guelph of 12 new telemedicine nurses who will be working at sites throughout the Waterloo Wellington LHIN.

Using telemedicine, health care professionals are able to deliver clinical care using live two-way video conferencing systems and related diagnostic equipment.

These nurses will expand access to care, reduce patient travel and improve access to specialized health services.

For example, elderly patients in rural Wellington can access Guelph's specialist in geriatric medicine from the office of their local family health team in Mount Forest or Palmerston. Residents at St. Joseph's Health Centre in

Guelph can access specialists in Toronto or Hamilton without leaving their residence. And mental health patients throughout Wellington and Waterloo can access specialized psychiatrists at Guelph's Homewood psychiatric hospital or Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health without leaving their community.

Telemedicine used for clinical services in the Waterloo Wellington LHIN expanded by almost 350% last year. Last year, the use of telemedicine throughout Ontario resulted in an estimated \$44 million in avoided travel costs.

The Ontario Telemedicine Network uses the latest technology. It's a smart way to improve access and quality of care for Ontario patients.

PETER LOUGHEED

Mr. Ted Arnott: I rise this afternoon as our party's critic to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to pay tribute to one of our finest Canadians, who passed away last week. Peter Lougheed was one of the most consequential Premiers that this country has ever seen. I was privileged to meet him once at an event in Toronto in the late 1990s, along with our now Halton region chair, Gary Carr.

As a political leader, Peter Lougheed was moderate, sensible and practical. Last week I heard former Alberta Premier Don Getty interviewed on CBC Radio. He described his colleague Mr. Lougheed as someone who was great to work with and who inspired everyone around him by his example.

When Peter Lougheed assumed the leadership of the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party, it was a minor party with limited prospects. He transformed it into one of the greatest political dynasties in Canadian history, holding power in Alberta without interruption since 1971.

He was a statesman who was widely respected across the country and was influential in the patriation of the Canadian Constitution. However, he was forthright and resolute in standing up to the federal government in fighting for his province's interests.

He presided over the transformation of Alberta into the booming energy powerhouse that we know today. He was a good steward of the province's resources. He did not squander his province's new-found oil wealth but instead had the foresight to establish the Alberta Heritage Fund to put money away for a rainy day.

Peter Lougheed was a man of honesty and integrity. He was a true leader who always had the best interests of his province at heart. Peter Lougheed exemplified the kind of leadership that every province would hope for.

All across Canada, we lament his passing, and our sincere condolences are extended to his family.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I rise today with enormous pleasure to recognize an important celebration that occurred in Lakeshore in my riding of Essex recently.

The Knights of Columbus Council 2775, in partnership with the town of Lakeshore and Seasons Lakeshore, paid tribute to couples in our area who embody the values of patience, family and community; 113 couples were recognized for their enduring commitment to each other in marriage.

In an era where the stresses on families are great and the challenges many, these couples stand as a testament to unconditional love and mutual respect, the hallmarks of any long-term relationship. They serve as role models to me and to my generation that, despite adversity, true love can indeed conquer all, and that the greatest achievement is not found in personal wealth or status but in a lasting partnership to share in life's joys together.

It is my great pleasure to congratulate all of this year's honorees and to wish them many more years of health, happiness and marital bliss.

WAR OF 1812 RE-ENACTMENT

Mr. Bob Delaney: Last weekend, I joined some 10,000 residents of western Mississauga to watch more than 100 re-enactors recreate a battle of the type fought during the War of 1812, on the island at Streetsville Memorial Park. Ward 11 Councillor George Carlson, Mayor McCallion and my overlapping member, MP Brad Butt, were also on hand to watch British, US and native Canadian forces clash.

No actual battle between the sides was fought in or near Streetsville at the time. However, in the re-enactment, to the clear favour of the spectators, the British and Canadian militia halted and then reversed the advance of the American regulars and militia, who, after a 40-minute skirmish, offered their honourable surrender.

Fellow Streetsville Rotarian and organizer Duncan Willock did a terrific job and brought the re-enactment to historic Streetsville, along with help from a government of Canada grant.

The Streetsville cemetery on Queen Street is the resting place for three Canadian 1812 veterans and one American who fought in the war.

The War of 1812, which lasted until 1815, was the only land war that was fought on Canadian soil after the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in Quebec in 1759. Royal Canadian Legion Branch 139 Streetsville also joined in the re-enactment at Streetsville Memorial Park.

1510

AVON MAITLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise today to make everyone in the Legislature aware of the great things that are happening in schools across the Avon Maitland school board in my riding.

Avon Maitland can be viewed as a very innovative board. For instance, they have an international student program, and most recently, the board has adopted a new progressive strategic plan for the next four years called Always Learning. They knew the vision would make

them more successful, but they had no idea that it would turn into such a musical hit as well.

The new hit, Always Learning, by Matt Hussey, has taken the region by storm. The song was originally written by Matt to help the board launch its new strategic plan, but the song and the music video became an instant hit.

Matt got together with iAM Productions and pulled together some Avon Maitland students to record what is now being described as the board's new theme song. iAM could also translate into "intelligent Avon Maitland."

School choirs across this district are learning to sing Always Learning. Schools are playing the song on their PA systems, and the music video has set a new board record for most-watched Avon Maitland video of all time. The song has become so popular that they have released it to iTunes for the low cost of 99 cents, with all proceeds going to the Foundation for Education Perth Huron.

If the song is downloaded once for every student in the Avon Maitland board, it would be equal to over \$11,000 extra that could be used for programming, workshops, funds and grants just this year.

I urge all my colleagues to go out and download Always Learning.

OTTAWA LITTLE THEATRE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's a great opportunity for me to talk about Ottawa Little Theatre, which is celebrating its remarkable 100th season this year.

The celebration was this past Saturday, with the grand opening of this special session. The Ottawa Little Theatre seeks to put "a little theatre in everyone's life." It has been offering popular, entertaining community theatre for 50,000 to 60,000 Ottawans each and every year, and it is one of the longest-running community theatre companies in all of Canada. In fact, Speaker, it has produced a remarkable 770 plays in its history to date.

It was founded in 1913 as the Ottawa Drama League. Some of its early performances were actually held in the Museum of Nature, which is located in my riding of Ottawa Centre and, during the First World War after the fire on Parliament Hill, also served as our temporary House of Commons as well.

It moved to a permanent location on King Edward Avenue in 1928 that unfortunately was destroyed by a fire in 1970. The new building opened at the same location in 1972.

Speaker, all directors, designers, actors and stage crew are volunteers. A big thank-you to them for their service over the years, and special thanks to board of directors president John Mark Keyes, Geoff Gruson, Margaret Coderre-Williams, Joe O'Brien, Ann Scholberg, Jane Morris, Klaas van Wieringh and Paul Hession. Congratulations on your 100th season.

IPF AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Bill Walker: This September is the first Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis (IPF) Awareness Month in

Canada. Established to increase awareness and understanding of this rare disease, this important day is a reminder to all Canadians of this debilitating and ultimately fatal disease that has no known cause.

It is estimated that up to 30,000 people in Canada are currently diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis, with 6,000 more being diagnosed annually. Today, approximately 5,000 Canadians die each year from this deadly disease.

This progressive and life-limiting disease is characterized by scarring in the lungs, hindering the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the body, making it extremely difficult for patients to breathe.

In 2009, Dr. Robert Davidson founded the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation, CPFF, to raise funds, finance research and find a cure for pulmonary fibrosis; raise public awareness about this rare and fatal disease; and offer support to those affected by pulmonary fibrosis.

Today, Dr. Davidson; George Habib, president of the Ontario Lung Association; Dr. Charles Chan, IPF researcher; and patients suffering with IPF will be at Queen's Park to educate MPPs about IPF.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, I'd like to welcome Robert Davidson and all members of the CFPP delegation to Queen's Park and thank them for their tireless work and leadership on this important issue.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIRST RESPONDERS DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DES PREMIERS INTERVENANTS

Mr. Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day /
Projet de loi 123, Loi proclamant le Jour des premiers
intervenants.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, if passed, this bill will designate May 1 of each year as First Responders Day in Ontario. Members will know that I introduced a similar bill just last week. The reason for the reintroduction, or the introduction, of this bill is that it now adds the term "emergency managers" as part of the definition of first responders.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition—I have thousands of them actually—from my riding

of Durham, and in fact from across Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of" current "emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their" vintage "vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced" aggressively "by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Maya, one of the pages here.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north's economy; and

"Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

"Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately."

I fully agree, sign my signature and give it to page Leo.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is the right of every Canadian to vote once in each election for the candidate of his or her choice and have their vote fairly counted and not offset by faulty voter registration or any sort of illegal practices; and

"Whereas credible allegations of voting irregularities exist for the most recent election, including non-citizens voting, persons voting multiple times at various voting stations and errors on the permanent register of electors list; and

"Whereas the practice of 'vouching' has been practised in polling stations where it is not permitted, such as non-rural polling stations, and does not require verified proof of a person's age, citizenship and residence in a riding;

1520

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 106, Prevention of Electoral Fraud Act, 2012, by Bas Balkissoon, the member for Scarborough-Rouge River, that would require that voters present proof of Canadian citizenship; require the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario to appoint an independent party to conduct a review of the permanent register of electors within six months after the bill passes and subsequently every five years; allow scrutineers to monitor the process by which voters add their names to the voters list on election day; and forbid vouching, which currently excludes the requirement for legitimate identification."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Jenna.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Premier McGuinty has imposed fee schedule cuts to family physicians and proposed wage freezes unilaterally, he has therefore alienated the province's family doctors. These actions threaten the future of health care in Ontario and will compound the existing family physician shortage. As wait times for primary care will inevitably increase, so will the frustration of millions of Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the Premier reconsider his decision and return to the negotiating table with the Ontario Medical Association and the province's doctors, thereby working alongside patients and their primary care providers."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present this petition.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my little page Leo to bring it to the Clerk.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is in serious need of modernization;

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is not in harmony with all the following acts, regulations, guidelines and codes: the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario, the radiation protection regulations of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the safety codes of Health Canada and the radiation protection guidelines of the International Commission on Radiological Protection;

"Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by Reza Moridi, the member from Richmond Hill, that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations, make recommendations on how to modernize this act, and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I fully agree with this petition, sign it and pass it on to page Sashin.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Office of Consolidated Hearings, a panel made up of two members of the Ontario Municipal Board and a vice-chair of the Environmental Review Tribunal, heard evidence for 139 days over the course of 39 weeks, where they heard from 36 experts, seven lay witnesses and numerous participants; and

"Whereas the evidence at the hearings made it overwhelmingly clear that the proposed Duntroon quarry would create and maintain 32 direct and over 150 indirect jobs and contribute significantly to the local economy; and

"Whereas the proposal has been studied for nine years and represents the continuation of a long-established land use in the area, where an existing quarry has been operating for over 40 years without significant negative impacts; and

"Whereas Walker Industries has entered into agreements with Clearview township and the county of Simcoe to provide substantial benefits to the municipalities that are above and beyond those required by the Aggregate Resources Act, the Planning Act and the Municipal Act; and

"Whereas the haul route along Simcoe County Road 91 has been used for this purpose for more than 40 years, steps have been taken to minimize environmental impacts, and there has been no opposition from the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the county of Simcoe or Clearview township;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government respect the decision made by the Office of Consolidated Hearings and allow the Duntroon quarry to move forward so that our environment can be protected and good jobs can be maintained and created for local families in need of work."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

Of course, I agree, and I'm going to give it to Leo to be delivered to the table with my signature.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is presently an interprovincial crossings environmental assessment study under way to locate a new bridge across the Ottawa River east of the downtown of Ottawa;

"Whereas the province of Ontario is improving the 174/417 split and widening Highway 417 from the split to Nicholas at an estimated cost of \$220 million;

"Whereas that improvement was promised to and is urgently needed by the commuters of Orléans and surrounding areas;

"Whereas the federal government has moved almost 5,000 RCMP jobs from the downtown to Barrhaven;

"Whereas the federal government is moving 10,000 Department of National Defence jobs from the downtown to Kanata;

"Whereas over half these jobs were held by residents of Orléans and surrounding communities;

"Whereas the economy of Orléans will be drastically impacted by the movement of these jobs westerly;

"Whereas additional capacity will be required for residents who will have to commute across our city to those jobs;

"We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and the Ministry of Transportation to do their part to stop this environmental assessment; and further, that the new road capacity being built on 174 and 417 be kept for Orléans and surrounding communities in Ontario; and further, that the province of Ontario assist the city of Ottawa in convincing the federal government to fund the light rail from Blair Road to Trim Road, which is much more needed now than 15,000 jobs accessible to residents of Orléans are moved out of reach to the west.

"We, the undersigned, support this petition and affix our names hereunder."

One of the petitioners here, Jean-Marc Lalonde, is well known in this House.

I agree with this petition and will send it to the table with Mathilde.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas the United Senior Citizens of Ontario has expressed its concerns over the high costs of parking at hospitals in Ontario on behalf of its more than 300,000 members; and

"Whereas thousands of Ontario seniors find it difficult to live on their fixed income and cannot afford these extra hospital parking fees added to their daily living costs; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association Journal has said in an editorial that parking fees are" indeed "a barrier to health care and add additional stress to patients who have enough to deal with" already;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's members of provincial Parliament and the Dalton McGuinty government take action to abolish parking fees for all seniors when visiting hospitals."

As a senior, it's kind of a conflict. I'm pleased to sign it, support it and present it to Jenna, one of the pages.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over northeastern Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north's economy; and

"Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

"Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire";

They petition the Legislative Assembly to immediately "halt the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask Page Zakhar to bring it to the clerk.

1530

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly on the electoral fraud in Ontario.

"Whereas it is the right of every Canadian to vote once in each election for the candidate of his or her choice and have their vote fairly counted and not offset by faulty voter registration or any sort of illegal practices; and

"Whereas credible allegations of voting irregularities exist for the most recent election, including non-citizens voting, persons voting multiple times at various voting stations and errors on the permanent register of electors list; and

"Whereas the practice of 'vouching' has been practised in polling stations where it is not permitted, such as non-rural polling stations, and does not require verified proof of a person's age, citizenship and residence in a riding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 106, Prevention of Electoral Fraud Act, 2012, by Bas Balkissoon, the member for Scarborough-Rouge River, that would require that voters present proof of Canadian citizenship; require the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario to appoint an independent party to conduct a review of the permanent register of electors within six months after the bill passes and subsequently every five years; allow scrutineers to monitor the process by which voters add their names to the voters list on election day; and forbid vouching, which currently excludes the requirement for legitimate identification."

I fully support this petition and will have Anna bring it to the Clerk.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

I'll affix my name to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY HOMES RENOVATION TAX CREDIT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU LOGEMENT AXÉ SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 12, 2012, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit / Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts en vue de mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour l'aménagement du logement axé sur le bien-être.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Further debate? Last call: Further debate? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry.

Mr. John O'Toole: I've spoken on this, but I would allow the member from Lanark to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry. You've already—sorry. Okay, can we get our act together, folks? The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is speaking.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I was intending to speak to another bill today, but Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit, has been called.

Speaker, I'll say a few things on Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, and start with a simple premise: We know that our province is in deep and dire financial straits. Of course, we saw that just recently, when the government recalled the Legislature two weeks early to debate Bill 115 on the wage freeze for the teachers in the province.

I find it interesting: It was during that emergency recall of the Legislature that Bill 2 was brought forward for debate before Bill 115 was. And of course, here's the

great contradiction of the present government: The Legislature gets recalled in an emergency fashion to deal with the very significant challenges on our finances in this province, but at the same time they bring forward and debate a bill which will increase expenditures and costs to the province. I think we should all be asking ourselves, "How can this be? How can we be in such dire financial straits that we need to freeze the wages of teachers but at the same time the provincial government is looking to spend more money with the healthy homes renovation tax credit?"

What truly is not just interesting but also appalling: This new bill—we don't know what the cost of it will be. We don't know what the take-up will be, so there's no way for us to know to what extent it will impact the finances of the province. We have no idea. We have some estimates that it will be over \$100 million, but there is no cap on that program. It all is determined by how many people take advantage of it.

So I want to ask the Liberal government: How can it be that capping teachers' wages was so, so important we had to recall the Legislature, but we debated an expenditure bill beforehand and we're still debating this expenditure bill on Bill 2?

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, maybe the member from Guelph will explain that contradiction. I know she was just interjecting here—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington knows that we don't have cross-debate with another member. You go through me, all right? Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes, Speaker. Maybe you could ask the member for Guelph to expand on her interjections at a little later time, then, through the Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for your assistance, member. Her turn would come up in a two-minute response, and she'll take care of it at that time. Thank you very much.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Anyway, Speaker, this bill is not about helping seniors; this bill is about continuing to try to cozy up with the Working Families Coalition and the building trades unions that have been so, so generous in their charity to the Liberal Party and to this government. Of course, some of that charity from some groups has been on the wane recently with Bill 115, and I guess they're doing everything possible to try to curry favour with those remaining members of the unionized Working Families Coalition that provide such healthy contributions to the Liberal Party.

We do know that it is not untrue that our finances are in significant difficulties in this province. Even most Liberals would agree to that: that we cannot continue to spend like drunken sailors in this province. Even drunken sailors know when they run out of money, and I think the Liberals are beginning to understand that they're running out of money. But it's just a beginning of that understanding, because once again, they're spending more and they're taking us into a program where we have no idea

just how much it's going to cost. Unlike the development funds that the Liberals also brought forward for debate before Bill 115, when the Legislature was recalled, we knew that there was a fixed amount to those programs—\$80 million of new spending by this government, which, again, you might wonder: Why did they debate an additional \$80-million expenditure during that recall session when we were recalled to cap those wages? Why? I think even the Speaker would see that there's a bit of a contradiction there: that we're going to spend more money, we're going to debate bills for further expenditures during an emergency recall on the dire straits of our finances in this province.

1540

I would like any member from the other side during their comments to explain that contradiction. Explain that contradiction not just to me, not to the opposition side; explain that to the people of Ontario. Explain how you can bring back the House on a recall measure to deal with the terrible, dire financial predicament you've put us in, but during that recall you bring in more bills and you debate bills to engage the taxpayers, to burden the taxpayers with additional money.

It's interesting. I did count those up. I believe there were eight bills and motions debated during that recall session—during that emergency—before we got around to debating Bill 115. They actually debated and voted on 11 other items before they got to the subject of the recall, Bill 115. I am going to be looking forward, through the Speaker, to members of the Liberal government explaining that to the people of Ontario.

How did you get yourselves into such a predicament that you debate more spending during an emergency recall to deal with the teachers, and why would you ever saddle the Ontario taxpayer with an open-ended expenditure such as Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act? An open-ended expenditure in these times is just a foolhardy measure by this Liberal government.

Of course—speak to anybody—this bill is just another facade. Those people who can afford to do those renovations—upwards of \$15,000 in renovations—will be able to apply for that tax credit. Where we really need to be focusing first is on those people who don't have the \$15,000 to make those upgrades but need assistance and help. If we're going to do any program, that's where it would be, and that's someplace where you could also cap the expenditure limits.

You could put in place how much the program was going to be ahead of time, instead of this foolhardy way of creating a program that's open-ended and could cost the treasury \$100 million, it could cost us \$200 million—it's unknown. Nobody on that side of the House in the Liberal government can give us an amount because of the way this program is structured.

Speaker, with your indulgence I look forward to listening to the Liberal government in their response.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Here we are with Bill 2 again, the second one that was introduced in the Legislature

since October of last year. It's the song that never ends; it's the bill that never gets passed. Let's just pass it.

Of course, I'm pleased to speak to it. I think my record on this would show that I am in concurrence with the intent, in agreement with the intent of the bill to address the situation that seniors face in this province when upgrading and retrofitting their homes so that many of them are able to stay in their homes longer.

I believe that's what the intent is, yet I have argued, as has our party, that the mechanisms within the bill don't go far enough. There are other jurisdictions, like Quebec, that do a far better job of aiding seniors to retrofit their homes and make them more accessible as well as safer for seniors. I believe they contribute upwards of 50% to a maximum of \$5,000 on a home renovation, whereas this is giving you 15% to a maximum of \$1,500 on a \$10,000 renovation. Of course, the criticism is: Which senior in this day has that disposable income?

I canvassed this weekend in my riding of Essex, and it seemed as though it was seniors' day in Essex because every person I spoke to, whether they were a senior or not, was concerned about the future for seniors in our province, whether it be the viability of CPP and the fact that we have to make sure that we raise that, or OAS, or the increased costs of hydro and home heating—various costs that affect our seniors day in and day out—or the fact that pension plans are under attack not only in the public sector but the private sector as well.

There's lots more we have to do, Mr. Speaker, but I believe we should support this bill, get it through and get it done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to be able to respond.

It's interesting: The reason this bill was called—because it was called, as was identified, last fall, but because, I think, 17 members of the Progressive Conservatives wished to speak to the bill, obviously that's why it has taken so long to get through this House. That is the choice that they have and they're quite happy to be able to have.

Having said that, I'm sure that if the member had read the bill, he would know that, in fact, the savings will be found internally, and—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order. The member from Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I know folks talk about the fact that there's a \$10,000 limit. Remember: You could put grab bars in for just over \$500, and you'd get a tax refund on this as well, so you do not have to spend a maximum amount of money. You have to be able to provide the receipts for a credit for a significant amount of the work that's being done.

Also, there was reference, Mr. Speaker, to a great deal of, "There's nothing else out there for a lot of other folks," and I'll just refer you to—there are three or four: winter warmth, home weatherization, golden age service,

budget billing, Live Green, the Toronto atmospheric fund. There are a number of energy retrofits for buildings and houses. The Ontario Power Authority has fridge and freezer pickup, saveONenergy, and save on heating and cooling. There are a significant number of programs that are available for a whole wide range of folks, and that's exactly what this is: another program to help people.

When you look at the issue of cost, it comes down to cost deferral. When you ask people who are older, one of the major reasons why they leave their homes is because of the fact that they can't get in and out of their bathtubs. This is a major issue. So having the new ability to put in a walk-in tub allows them to stay in their home, stay out of a retirement home or stay out of a long-term-care facility. That's the reason why this is a good piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: There are two things: The member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, I believe, did the very best he could in the limited time he was allowed.

I will take exception with the member from Etobicoke Centre. She said—this is the seniors she's talking to, and this tells you a lot about how Dalton McGuinty and his caucus think. What she said is that you could put a grab bar in for \$500 and get the tax credit. Here's the truth of it all: They have difficulty paying their energy bill. You know that, Speaker, yourself; I've heard you say it. But also, if you did look at it and you get 10% back, that's \$50. But you have to spend 13% in tax, so on \$500, you're actually paying \$65 in tax, and they're giving you \$50 back. What's that all about? It's a shell game. It's shameful what she's doing here. It's completely unacceptable.

She said we shouldn't be discussing this. I'm a senior. I'm worried what he's doing to Ontario. I can hardly afford to pay my energy bill.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's true. All of a sudden, they know best, and that's the father-knows-best syndrome. The worst thing that has ever happened to Ontario is, they got this guy elected again. I can't believe it. The people had the wool pulled over their eyes.

I really will say this to you: This is time to discuss. Bring in important—I try to make this point, Mr. Speaker. Could I have more time? Because I'm running out of time. Here's the deal: There's an article here. This is from the Toronto Star. I'm going to file this report. It says that Ontario is worst for inequity. It goes on: "Ontario is the worst in Canada when it comes to growing poverty, increasing income inequality and financial support for public services...." That's Ontario after nine years; it's shameful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

1550

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's a pleasure to speak on Bill 2, the healthy homes renovation tax credit.

I'd like to comment on something that the member from Etobicoke Centre said, I believe, that the inability to access a washroom is one of the major reasons people leave their home. I would agree with that, but it's one. There are a lot of reasons: inability to pay the bills, inability to fix the roof.

While we as a party agree with this bill, in our opinion, the intent is not so much to further seniors as it is a good press release for the party. We would hope it would be something bigger. We are hoping for something bigger—we are hoping. I truly believe that the members across the aisle want to do their best. But once again, they are going for the little picture.

I would like to disagree with the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington that you have to stop spending everything. The trick is to spend money in the right places. You can't stop spending all over because then the economy will collapse—

Mr. John Yakubuski: Nobody's suggesting that.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's what I hear. That's what I hear.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock, please.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): When I stand, you stop.

And I'd like to remind the official opposition there are six sidebars going on. I cannot hear the speaker. One of the people was standing up and shouting to his members when he could go over and talk to them. Well-behaved on this side, I might add. I would ask that we cut it down a couple of notches. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. John Vanthof: I will try to pay more attention to the Chair.

One thing I heard the government across say is that this is a job creation project. You have to make up your minds, because keeping seniors in their homes isn't necessarily a job creation project. If you're going to put grab bars in your bathroom—where are the calculations? How many grab bars equals one job? Once again, it's just an assumption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has two minutes.

Mr. Randy Hillier: First off, to make reference to the member for Etobicoke Centre: I think she's looking more for grab bags and grabbing on to anything, along with the grab bars.

I will have to say to the member from Durham, he had such a—

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Excuse me?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Mr. Speaker, I think that's a slur and I think that's unnecessary. It's offensive. I understand he has a particular opinion but I also think that he has to be respectful to the members in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think the member—I can understand her concern, and he certainly was skimming around the edges of being out of line. I will remind him—because he didn't define what he meant by the one comment and he didn't get into any detail about it, but I would suggest that he be very careful about how he handles an individual's performance.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd also have to mention the member from Durham; even with laryngitis, he has such a presence with his voice in the House. I hope I didn't offend anybody with that one.

Let's go back. I did ask the Liberals to explain. I asked them to explain that contradiction that is so apparent and so clear, and of course, the member from Etobicoke Centre did not explain that. She skated around my question to the Liberal Party.

I do believe, referencing the members from Timiskaming and Essex, there are some tricks, but the tricks are over here from the Liberal Party on this bill.

They have got us into a dire financial predicament in this province, and they continue to take us down that path. They cannot recognize that the time to stop spending money is not just when your pockets are empty but when your credit cards are loaded up and there's no more credit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Second call: Further debate?

The member from York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to offer a few comments today on the bill.

I think, though, that while it purports to provide real help for seniors, it's a real sound bite. When you think about the fact that most seniors live on a fixed income, this means they have very little to be able to allocate for something like the renovation, and the way that the home renovation tax credit works is simply that they're going to receive a tax credit. They're going to have to have the money that they want to spend on this particular renovation ahead of time.

Actually, this morning a study came out on seniors and retirement and their fiscal strength and health in Ontario, and one of the things that was mentioned about people retiring is that very often a significant percentage of people are forced into retirement, not a planned retirement, whether it's health or other circumstances that create this. So I think we need to first look at the issue of the fixed income that seniors normally have. This, then, creates continuing pressures for them.

You look at the high cost of staying in your own home. Certainly I'm aware of the comments that I receive on a regular basis from seniors in my riding who are very sensitive to the increased cost of living. They look at gas prices, they look at even food prices that have gone up, and they're always looking at the fact that there are those essentials that seem to be under continual pressure of increased costs. Here I'm talking about things like hydro rates increasing. So to have the government talking about the potential of a renovation tax credit that

would keep you at home is something that really isn't even available to most seniors.

They're also looking at interest rates that are the lowest in a decade, and that's their bread and butter, frankly: their RRSPs, their investments, their nest eggs that they see with very, very low interest rates.

The bill appears to be one that has been hastily put together. It doesn't require a means test, so anyone who is 65 or over can look at his or her own dwelling and say, "Well, this would help keep me in my house longer." We talk about the grab bars. By the way, it would not take very much to increase beyond the allowed amount for the tax credit. If you have to widen a door frame, a doorway, if you have to put up a ramp, you'll very quickly exceed the maximum cost available.

So there's no means test. The person can own, rent or live in the dwelling that they wish—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay. Second reminder to the official opposition: Your member is speaking, and there isn't one person who is listening. They're all in discussion. I can't hear her. So could we cut it back. If you want to have your sessions, there's the door. The lobby is out there, and there is lots of room out there to talk. We had five people talking here. Please cut it back. Thank you.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The point I was making was the fact that it appears to be hastily put together, with no means test. It doesn't matter whether you own, rent or live in a facility in which you are looking at making some kind of renovations.

1600

I also want to talk about the limits of the tax credit itself. I've already mentioned the fact that you have to have the money in order to do the renovation, but you also have to be able to be the beneficiary of the tax credit. It has to be enough to make a difference. When you look at the fact that it's 15% but you are also paying HST at 13%, it really means that you're looking at a 2% difference, an opportunity there.

I want to also, in the moments that remain, look at the bigger picture. One of the things about staying in your home: While definitely the first choice, I think, of most people, there certainly comes a time for many where it doesn't matter whether you have a grab bar, a ramp or something like that, but the level of home care is not adequate for you.

Last year, before the election, the Auditor General provided all Ontarians with a review of the 2011 pre-election report on Ontario finances. There's some interesting reading there. The fact that it was a year ago doesn't matter; the issues are the same. What he demonstrated in that report was the continual growth of long-term-care-home costs. They have increased, on average, 8.6% per year over the past eight years. In 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014, the government plans to hold growth in expenditures to an average of 4.2% per year, or about half of the past growth rate. An equal kind of draconian

number exists for CCAC expenditures, where they have averaged 7.2% year over year. Again, the government's forecast for 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 assumes that their growth will average 2.3% per year.

The obvious question to ask is: If the government is going to increase home care services, what numbers are they starting with? As we look at an aging population, the need for funding is driven by the increased demand for home care. Yet this government has committed to a rate cut from the increase of an average of 7% down to 2%. You have to wonder: Does the government want us to believe that the demand has fallen? And if the government does not increase funding enough to meet the demand, then it will mean that more and more seniors and others are on waiting lists for home care. We know that what also happens to that whole continuum of care is that people are in hospitals; they are waiting for the opportunity to be in the long-term-care facility.

What we're looking at here is really very, very token—as I mentioned, not real help, but a real sound bite, and that's what the home renovation tax credit is all about. It does not provide a significant opportunity to keep people in their homes. It does not take into account the fiscal pressures that the government has committed to reducing. So, almost a year after the election, we're talking about what we talked about last year: the crisis in home care for our seniors in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

M. Michael Mantha: Merci, monsieur le Président. Nous voici encore, une autre fois, en train de discuter de la pièce de législation ici, le projet de loi 2. Or, il me semble que ça fait au moins un bon deux heures que je me lève pour parler de ce document-ci et de ce projet de loi qui va essentiellement aider, oui, mais l'aide que ça va offrir va être minime. C'est le grosso modo du bill. Tu regardes les gens qui vont être éligibles à profiter de ce projet—sérieusement, il faudrait qu'on regarde aux gens que ça va aider : seuls ceux qui ont un budget ou qui ont de l'argent ou qui ont des enfants, ceux qui ont un montant d'argent jusqu'à un minimum de 10 000 \$. Et puis ce n'est pas le maximum qu'il faut que tu dépenses. Oui, absolument, tu peux dépenser moins d'argent que les 10 000 \$ qui sont demandés dans le budget pour avoir le plein crédit du 1 500 \$, mais essentiellement, il n'y a pas grand gens qui vont avoir un avantage avec ce projet de loi.

Dans ma circonscription d'Algoma-Manitoulin, les gens qui m'approchent à la porte, ce n'est pas des crédits qu'ils veulent. Les gens qui m'approchent et avec qui je discute des projets à leur porte ont besoin d'argent aujourd'hui. Ils ont besoin d'argent par la fin du mois. Ils ont besoin d'argent pour rencontrer des dépenses par la fin du mois. Ce n'est pas des crédits dont ils ont besoin ou qu'ils demandent; ils demandent un service aujourd'hui. Ils demandent qu'on soit capable de les écouter pour leur rendre les bénéfices dont ils ont besoin pour rendre leur vie un peu plus équitable.

C'est beau de voir ce projet ici. Vous savez, nous autres, à partir du parti NPD, oui, c'est un pas en avant qu'on voit. Les chances sont qu'on va le supporter. Mais ce n'est pas essentiellement un projet de loi qui va aider les gens en gros. Puis, il faut vraiment qu'on cherche comment on va aider ces gens-là avec de bonnes idées, de bons sujets et de bons projets de loi. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Merci. Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm glad to have this opportunity to address the remarks made by our colleague from York-Simcoe and perhaps more generally the comments that we've heard this afternoon. It seems like the official opposition is trying to say that this is unnecessary, excessively costly, that we haven't costed out the entire program appropriately, and from the NDP, we're hearing that of course we're not going far enough. So it seems to me that Bill 2 in fact is a very reasonable, prudent, balanced approach, which really is what our government is all about.

As we age, we talk about the continuum of care. It's inevitable with the march of time that each of us is going to suffer from increasing disability to a certain extent. What Bill 2 does, it gives seniors a chance to exercise their own choice—in fact, choosing what they need to stay in their own homes for as long as possible.

I know in my own riding—it was about a year ago when we were exploring this particular idea in our platform—this was an exceptionally popular move. There are many people in my riding looking after their parents, their seniors in their home, and this tax credit applies to them as well, so that where children are looking after their parents, they may need just a few additions in their home to allow their parents to stay with them in that family unit.

Of course we've looked at the cost of this potential program, modelling it somewhat on the federal Conservative 2009 home renovation tax credit. We know what the uptake of that particular tax credit was, and so of course we costed it out in relation to that potential uptake.

This is a prudent and sensible measure, and we should be voting on it as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to be here to discuss Bill 75.

I've had an opportunity to debate this myself as a member, and I want to congratulate, of course, the member from York-Simcoe who, each and every time she takes the floor of this assembly, commands an enormous amount of respect because she understands her file and she has a comprehensive view of the legislation before the House. I think that she and I share a concern with this legislation in that it is only available for certain seniors who have a certain amount of money. We, on the other hand, are concerned that we are protecting all seniors and making sure that they all have an ability to succeed into their retirement years in a healthy and safe way.

Now, what my big concern is—and I've stated this in the House before. My mom is a widow, and my mom was widowed in her 50s. We're not talking about a millionaire here, and we're certainly not talking about anybody who got a big retirement nest egg. I look at anyone who would be in my mom's situation where that safety net isn't there because, simply put, she was a housewife. She raised my sister and I, and that's what she did for a living. Anybody in that situation doesn't really have a lot of access to \$5,000 or \$10,000 to do renovations to their home, certainly not even to improve it, because if the furnace goes or the washer or the dryer go or something else goes, that's what the priority is.

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What the government is basically doing here is saying, "We're going to give you a credit and we're going to help you out, but only if you spend a bunch of money." It's like going to the appliance centre and saying, "I'm going to buy this refrigerator and then I'm going to do the mail-in rebate." Well, you know what? That doesn't help anybody at the point of purchase, and this isn't going to help any senior in Ontario at the point of their purchase.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My, my, my. This government has been in power for nine years and this is as good as it get for seniors. It's shameful. This is a government that have said that they want to decrease poverty by 25% in five years. In fact, they're overseeing a province where poverty is going up. If you heard the Daily Bread results this morning, it's going to go up by about 25% in five years under their watch.

Let me say frankly that seniors—many, many seniors—live in poverty. They're the ones who are using the food banks. To say to somebody who can't pay their heating bills, who can't pay their rent or their mortgage, who can't pay their hydro bills—that's a major one for my seniors—who can't pay their bills, that if they spend money up front, down the pipe maybe a year later they might get 10% back, that's worse than sad. It's insulting, Mr. Speaker. It's insulting for seniors.

No senior I know or have ever met is being kicked out of their house because they don't have grab bars around the bathtub. No senior I've ever met is having to leave their home because they don't have a ramp. They're leaving their homes because of poverty; they're leaving their homes because they don't have home care.

You heard the member from York-Simcoe talking about the plight of home care. We have home care workers who would rather work at Tim Hortons because they make more money at Tim Hortons than they do providing care—the care that our seniors need. That is the state of care for our seniors trying to live at home in Ontario. Trust me, it's not about the uptake, it's not about the costs, because I don't think very many people will take this up. I would love to see the figures tabled from this government about how much money they actually spent on this program, because I would suggest that very

few seniors or their families will take this program up. That's what they're counting on, Mr. Speaker. They're counting on few seniors taking it up. A sound bite for sure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York—Simcoe has two minutes.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the comments made by the members from Algoma—Manitoulin, Oak Ridges—Markham, Nepean—Carleton and Parkdale—High Park.

I think I'll just start with the response from the member from Parkdale—High Park. I would agree with her. One of the things that I thought would be very interesting is that this bill have some kind of ability to test its validity. When you are able to actually look at the kind of pickup and support, how many people has it actually affected? Certainly it's not something that the seniors in my riding discuss.

I think the question that the member from Nepean—Carleton mentioned about the point of purchase is the whole dilemma with providing a tax credit. You have to have the money up front. You have to wait for a long time. You have to save all the paperwork, do it, and then get something back.

The seniors in my riding are very conscious of the fact that the squeeze they are getting is that of the financial ability through lower interest rates that their savings collect, the increase in energy costs—those are the things that are driving them from their homes. I think many members have expressed similar concerns, that this isn't really what's driving people from their homes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate. The member from Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Just for note, Speaker, you're the only one who gets my name correct every single time I stand up. Thank you very, very much.

I'm pleased to speak for the third time on Bill 2 today, and I just have four or five arguments I want to talk about and then I can wrap it up. I'll try to add something to the conversation that I haven't heard yet through the days of listening to this debate, but I'll start out with just going over the usual, that our point is that it's only a 15% credit maximum on \$10,000.

I keep hearing in the media that seniors are going to get \$1,500 back—\$1,500 given to seniors. They've got to pay \$10,000 to get that \$1,500. I don't know too many seniors in my riding who have that type of money to get that credit or where to get that credit. Those who have that money are golfing at the local golf club. They're planning on doing some renovations because they're fortunate enough in their retirement to have enough money. So this credit is nice for them to get. They're going to apply for it and get it because everybody thinks the government takes too much money from them at the end of the day and they all want back their share. But the majority of the seniors in my riding aren't really having those funds to actually pay \$10,000 to get \$1,500 back.

It doesn't include certain items, like a furnace. Do you not think that maybe improving somebody's furnace in their home will give them adequate enough heat and

cooling, but at the same time it's probably going to lower energy rates, which is really what seniors are getting nailed on in this economy? It's the fact that the energy rates are through the roof. They have the HST on their energy bills, and they have that debt retirement charge on top of it. So that is just continually adding up.

Maybe if they tweaked this measure, maybe they could put it towards furnace upgrades in their house to help lower their energy bills, and then perhaps this might be something to go after.

Oh, you're not leaving.

I thought he was leaving me. He stood up on me.

You see, I'm watching you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Did I throw you off? Sorry.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It's all right.

So what I'm thinking is, maybe a better use of this money would be to actually follow through on one of the original bills in this House back in November that passed with the support of the House, which is getting rid of the HST off our heating bills for everybody, not just seniors, and maybe even going a step further and figuring out how much of that debt retirement charge is really there and finishing that bill off, because people are really sick of paying those bills.

The other problem I find with this bill is that the people who have the money to put the \$10,000 out are just starting out in retirement. They have a long time to go before they need to renovate their house. How are they to know what part of the house to renovate when they have the cash at, say, age 65, age 70, when they're far from needing any renovations? How do they know their hip is going to go on them or their knee is going to go on them or they're going to need a ramp? They don't know, at that age, so are they supposed to use telekinesis and decide what to renovate in their house at that time? If they wait till they're 80 or 85, they're probably quite an amount into their retirement savings, if they're fortunate to have some, to actually benefit from using this tax credit.

The other thing I've noticed, just thinking—I've heard the number bounced around that it's going to cost around \$300 million a year, and they're going to take this from elsewhere to offset the cost. In retrospect, I've figured out where they're getting that money from. They're going to end the slots-at-racetracks program, the horse racing, which is approximately about \$300 million a year that they generate in cost-sharing revenue with the horse industry. Basically they're going to take the \$300 million from the horse racing industry that they get in the revenue-sharing agreement and allow it to a minute portion of the senior population in Ontario to make some renovations, but they're going to get rid of 60,000 jobs and they're going to end in the slaughter of 15,000 horses, all in the matter of this election ploy from a year ago to garner some support coming into the October election. So I just thought that was pretty interesting.

The other argument I have is, the bill is window dressing. As I said before, they're actually trying to hide

the fact that the cost of living in this province is tremendously high and increasing day to day, and to throw this credit out is to throw a red herring at them to go, "Oh, I'm going to get this beautiful credit from this government," whereas, as already mentioned, the energy costs are through the roof. And it's not just for seniors or low-income people; it's for everybody. It's for those struggling to make their mortgage payments month to month and the fact that they've pay the HST on their energy bills. They've got an energy policy in this province that is shooting our energy costs through the roof. We've got taxes that are unbelievable in this province that people are paying day to day.

Thinking of that, I kind of focused in on this high cost-of-living thing. The government is willing to help out just a certain portion of the population of Ontario. Again, they're back to their motives, Speaker, picking winners and losers, and I think that as a whole has to stop. They focus on, "Maybe we'll just help some seniors here." Even though they think they're helping every senior, they're not. It's a small, minute portion that is actually going to get the \$1,500 at the end of the day.

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In fact, I did some online shopping before I came here—what it would cost someone to stay in their home. I don't think you need \$10,000 if you barely have the money to get by. A grab bar is \$20, and I've seen some bathrooms where you can maybe put two or three grab bars in—there's \$60—and I do know of some pharmacies out there that, if you buy a grab bar from them, they install it for free, so we'll say that installation is free.

A raised toilet seat with arms: If you need a raised toilet seat installed, it takes a couple of minutes to put it in, and it's \$64. A bath bench with a back is \$63.99. A bath mat—this is a really great bath mat you won't slip on—\$22.99. Those are just small things. There are other things on here. You can get a reacher to help you pick things up, but that doesn't count under this bill. That's only \$15.

But the fact is, you can probably do good enough renovations, because people do what they need to do to get by, considering they don't have lots of money. You can probably get by with renovating your house to stay in it for a couple of hundred dollars, and I think the fact that you're throwing out \$10,000 when you can't do any substantial renovations that are meaningful is a ruse that the Liberals are throwing out there.

I've already talked about the HST and the debt retirement. Going back to argument 4 here—I know I'm skipping argument 3 because I kind of ran over it earlier—the fact that the Liberals promoted in this last election that they wanted immediate action, in fact, on September 29, 2011, the Canadian Press ran an article entitled "McGuinty Fast-Tracks Home Reno Tax Credit; Election Rivals Say He's Desperate." Well, he's been desperate for the last year, and it hasn't stopped yet, with the previous shenanigans over the teachers over the last month.

But the fact that he said this was going to be immediate—"We're going to bring it right out"—that was just

about 12 months ago, and I don't see how that was immediate or fast. The government can throw it at us about wasting time, but it has been a year, and the fact that their House leader has been unable to actually get any bills passed—maybe two or three—let alone we have no committees to get these bills to third reading, I think that's kind of ridiculous. I don't know if you think so, but the fact that we have no committees operating 11 months into this Legislature's 40th session I think is kind of odd and weird.

Interjection: It's terrible.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It is terrible, very terrible.

I think what the government needs to do, when they make a promise and they actually mean it, is to follow through with their actions. The fact that they just wanted to get votes with this tax credit, much like they did to get the few seats they saved with the power plants last year, Mississauga and Oakville—of course, we've been talking about possible contempt this Monday when the Minister of Energy won't release those documents. We're hoping that he does and follows through with the will of this House, which the government seems to not want to do lately.

My last argument—it's a minute and 42 there—is the fact that they're blaming us for this delay, much like they're trying to say that we were blocking Bill 11 a few months ago. The fact is that this government is plagued with scandal. I feel sorry for the back bench there, because it's the cabinet here that's running the show, and they're full of scandal. We look at Ornge. They say we're wasting time in getting bills passed, but the fact that this whole House motioned for a select committee on Ornge to find out what's going on with Ornge and where the money is going and who's really in charge there—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Sorry, Speaker; I know.

Back to the bill: This was more of an election ploy, and they're saying that we were blocking its passage when in fact they've been blocking committee structure; they've been blocking their own bills passing through. I just wish they'd sit down and look at Ontario as a whole and look at how you can reduce costs for Ontarians across this province, and that's taking the HST off your energy bills, getting rid of that debt retirement charge and getting rid of your apprenticeship ratios, putting them to one to one, so that we can get people back to work in this province. I look forward to the responses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Hey, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to get up again here and speak to G20—or G2. It feels like G20. Sorry.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I just remind the member from Essex that we kind of keep it a little more formal than "Hey there," okay?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: All right, Mr. Speaker. Sorry. I will be more formal. It is G2, I believe. Thank you for the clarification.

To add to some of the comments from my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London, who I think expresses some of the same concerns, the bill is a token measure. It's window dressing, sort of a band-aid solution, a small amount of support for those in our province who really need the support the most: seniors who are on fixed incomes, who are having a hard time, who are facing disability, facing mobility issues, potentially ambulatory, who need extensive renovations to their homes yet really will not be able to find the resources to do that. This is a small measure to assist them in that scenario.

He mentioned that something should be more tangible, such as a furnace upgrade. That was in a previous program, the eco-energy rebate program, which gave up to \$5,000 on furnaces and windows. I think that was also matched by a federal program. That was widely successful, and I think it was too successful. We certainly don't have the threat of this program, with its small amount of support, being too widely successful, because we know that seniors need more and they're asking us for more. It would be nice for the government to show that they are listening and to provide some more assistance in that regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the speech by the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London and, I think, Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

There was some question from both of these speakers as to why we are still calling this bill. First off, it's important to understand that it's Bill 2 because it was the first thing, essentially, that we tabled back in November. We think this is an important piece of legislation.

The second thing to understand is that the standing orders which you enforce, Speaker, only allow the government to call a bill once in any sessional day. So when the House was recalled a few weeks ago to debate Bill 115, we could only do that once a day. We chose to debate Bill 115 whenever there were the most hours available. We were required by the standing orders to call a different bill, and we chose this bill because we believe it is important that we get it.

Contrary to the comments opposite about how seniors don't care, I actually just had a letter this week from one of my constituents who is a senior, saying, "I've been saving my receipts. When am I going to get to use them?" Of course, our response was, "If the Conservatives would stop throwing up speakers, we could all have a vote and we could get this passed, and then you can use your receipts that you've been saving for the past year to get your tax credit." In fact, if this bill gets the same sort of take-up that the tax credit from the federal government did, which was similarly structured a few years ago—if we get the same take-up, we think 380,000 seniors will use it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I just would like to add my two minutes' worth to the member from Elgin–Middle-

sex–London, and what a speech he had. I'll tell you, I was very impressed with how he did it, his delivery and his mannerism. It's just—

Interjection: Remarkable.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Remarkable.

Speaker, this bill was introduced about a year ago. I listened to the members opposite saying what a great idea this was. Well, cancelling a gas plant was a great idea last fall too, and look what happened there.

Mr. Bill Walker: How much is that going to cost us?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I don't know that.

Mr. Bill Walker: Millions. Hundreds of millions.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Millions of dollars wasted. We could have given a bunch of that money, instead of doing that, to seniors to help them with their home renovations. Now we have to go looking for the money.

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I also heard that if we would sit down and quit speaking to the bill, we could get it passed. It is our right to speak, Speaker. That's what we are here to do. So for the member from Guelph to say something like that is ridiculous, in my opinion.

I think that if this government wanted this bill through, they would have formed committees to do it. They didn't do that. They resisted that all along. I also think, concerning our economy, that if they hadn't gone along and cancelled the slots-at-racetracks program, they wouldn't be putting people out of work in this province.

It's just incredible how this government thinks—

Mr. Bill Walker: Or not.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Or not.

I was impressed, at the plowing match yesterday, to look at how our agricultural community does things. This government should look at our agricultural community and see how it's done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, speaking to G2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act, I'd like to comment on some of the comments made by the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London. I agree with most of the things he said, but one thing occurred to me. He talked about taking the HST off home heating. I remember when we passed this, one of the arguments from the other side of the House was, "Well, yes, but what happens to the rich people? They don't need the HST off. So the tax isn't fair."

My question to the other side of the House is, what happens to Gilda, who comes from Iroquois Falls to my office and needs a new roof to stay in her house, because her house leaks, or she needs new windows? Or do you know what? She can just survive, and she could use a new bathtub, but she has to borrow the money and then get the payment, wait a year for the money back.

I'm not saying this is a bad program for the people who can afford it. But what about the people who can't? They deserve to be able to stay in their house. Actually, if you keep them in their house it'll be cheaper—we all know that. What about those people? You're making a

choice. Just like the people on Thanksgiving Day when the train is closed and there aren't enough buses, you're making a choice about who can go home to northern Ontario for Thanksgiving, and that's a crime.

We have to look at programs. This program will help keep some seniors in their home—some—and it makes for lots of sound bites, a year of sound bites already, just like the sound bite yesterday on the local foods act. How many times will we hear that till we actually see something happen?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London has two minutes.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank the members from Essex, Guelph, Perth–Wellington and Timiskaming–Cochrane for their insights into my debate.

I would like to just respond about the delay in getting this bill done. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin had an excellent bill that actually did remove the HST off heating around the same time this bill came out, and we have yet to see this bill resurface from committee. Calling on the government, maybe this is the time to actually step up and do it.

They took a good page out of our Changebook from the election, giving hard-working Ontario families a break, not the Working Families Coalition that we have mixed with the opposition that imploded last week, but that's another story.

I think what we really have to do to fix this problem is not give more credits; we need to get our economy on track again. We need the government to be focused. We've got to reduce regulation on businesses. We've got to get apprenticeships at 1-to-1 so we can create some jobs. We've got to get a good energy policy that's not putting people out of business—get rid of that global adjustment charge—and we have to lower some tax rates so we can attract some businesses. I know that you, over to the left, are not going to agree with me, but what's going to work is lowering some taxes.

Speaker, the Ontario PC Party has a plan for this province. It's not fake tax credits that are only for the minority, when you can probably renovate your house, as I said earlier, for a couple of hundred dollars—installation free of charge. I'm pretty that sure if you buy it all at one place, there are cheap ways out there, working with small, independent businesses out there, small corporate businesses out there—whoever it is—supporting the local economy and doing these renovations for a low price. You don't need the tax credits this government is proposing that people get. Number one, they don't have the money, and number two, it's not needed.

Thank you for your time, and thank you for listening to me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Simcoe.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Simcoe–Grey, to be exact. I'd like to get re-elected in Grey county, too, if possible.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity, a few minutes, to speak on Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax

Credit Act. I find it a bit rich that we're debating this bill to provide what amounts to meagre savings to barely a handful of people, seniors who are fortunate enough to have \$10,000 in the bank. I know that point has been made by many people, including me on second reading debate, but it needs to be stressed.

This government has done nothing but pickpocket these people, to the point where they've been hiking taxes and fees for seniors for the past nine years. Despite Premier McGuinty's famous ad campaign in 2003 where he said, "I'm telling Ontario families that their taxes will not go up tomorrow, or any day, under a Liberal government"—of course we all know that was complete nonsense. Seven months later, he brought in what was the single largest tax increase in Ontario history when he implemented the health tax. This tax alone has robbed more than \$18 billion from families and seniors since being implemented.

But that's not all. There are lots more reasons why seniors can't afford Bill 2. The harmonized sales tax added 8% in new taxes to thousands of products and services, including haircuts, home-heating fuel, electricity and gasoline, just to name a few. All told, this new tax is depleting our collective pocketbook by \$3 billion per year, making it an even bigger tax and greedier tax grab than the health tax that the McGuinty Liberals brought in.

Then there's the \$53-million hidden hydro tax, which they snuck in last year, and smart meters and time-of-use metering were also assaults on household finances, particularly for seniors, who are retired and spend more time in their homes during the day than most of the rest of us and like to do laundry during the day when it's convenient, when they're able to do so.

Since 2003, hydro rates have gone up a staggering 75%. Over the next five years, rates will rise at least another 46% according to the government itself, and that doesn't include the government's decision to extend the debt retirement charge by seven years, which amounts to \$1 billion per year, plus we pay HST on top of that, again draining seniors' and families' pocketbooks. So they can't afford the \$10,000 that you need in order to do home renovations under Bill 2.

Then there's also auto insurance rate hikes that happened while coverage requirements were reduced. In fact, your coverage was reduced by 50% and your rate hikes averaged about 8% or maybe more—I'd have to defer to some of my colleagues who probably know the facts a little better on that. But I know my personal rates went up, and that's what I hear from my constituents.

The government went on to apply the land transfer tax on fractional ownership, implemented the Ontario tire stewardship fee and increased fees for various government services, including commercial vehicle operators' registration and driver testing. There were also increased taxes on beer, wine and spirits, and they even raised the floor price on beer, claiming social responsibility. But now they want to litter our communities with slot machines, so I'm not sure how sincere they are about so-called social responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, let's not forget the sneaky eco-taxes that they slapped on electronics, such as computers, TVs and iPods. Families now have to use their credit cards instead of their OHIP cards for eye exams, physiotherapy and chiropractic appointments. Out-of-pocket health care expenses paid by middle-class households have jumped by 43% in the last 10 years.

What effect do these endless tax hikes have on households? Well, we're working longer and harder than ever with less and less to show for our efforts. We spend more time on wait-lists and lineups for services, while the system wastes valuable resources, like the scandal at eHealth and the completely useless local health integration networks that the government set up. Personal bankruptcy figures for Ontario—figures that I have available—reveal that in the first nine months of this year 37,462 residents declared bankruptcy, and the number of consumer bankruptcy proposals filed increased by 26%.

Clearly, life in Ontario has changed, and this tiny little tax package contained in Bill 2 does very little to mitigate nine years of the regrettable McGuinty government decisions.

1640

I think it's important to reiterate some of the points made by our critic, the honourable member for Thornhill, Mr. Shurman, and several of my colleagues, who have done a good job of putting this bill into perspective throughout the time that we've been considering it.

The first point is this: Seniors of modest means and those who need help the most won't see any benefit from Bill 2 and the tax plan contained therein. As our finance critic pointed out, seniors who are 65 or older make up about 13% of Ontario's population—1.8 million people. The median income of those seniors in Ontario is \$25,000 per individual and \$45,000 per couple. That's equal to about \$2,000 to \$3,700 gross income per month. In order to qualify for the maximum tax credit of \$1,500 in this bill, a senior citizen has to spend \$10,000. This plan actually costs seniors \$8,500 if they've got that kind of money to spend in the first place, and that's the catch: Many simply don't have that kind of money in the first place. In fact, most of the 1.8 million seniors in Ontario won't see anything from this legislation.

Those who do participate will be faced with other taxes payable. I believe it was the member for Durham who pointed out that if you spend \$10,000 on renovations, thanks to the government's HST you'd have to pay \$1,400 in sales tax, so at the end of the day, after fully enjoying the benefits of Bill 2, you would have saved \$100.

The next catch is this: Only some renovations qualify, because the improvement cannot be made to increase property value. I don't know how many people would want to do renovations to their house and their house value doesn't go up. You've really got to wrap your head around that one. That would be difficult. That means no new windows or insulation to help tackle energy costs, and no heating or air conditioning upgrades. Those are things that could truly help seniors who are trying to stay

in their homes, especially given this government's enormous increases in energy prices.

Clearly, this bill doesn't actually help seniors in any kind of broad-based way. I really don't see how the members of the government side could convince themselves otherwise. Not only does this bill not help seniors; it has no meaningful impact whatsoever on the economy, and it does nothing to correct nine years of tax hikes. Our finance critic pointed out—again, the honourable member for Thornhill—that it doesn't really encourage any kind of broad-based renovation projects and it doesn't really create jobs on any kind of broad basis. We have to look at things on a bigger scale. We're facing the highest level of unemployment in recent history, with 600,000 people, men and women, who woke up this morning with no job to go to. Stats Canada tells us that last month we lost another 25,000 jobs.

This bill is just not that good, and it's not what seniors are worried about. I know that if you polled the 19,000 seniors in my riding and their families, most of them would say that their number one concern is long-term care and a nursing home bed and home care. Without question, it's one of the biggest issues that I deal with in my constituency offices. There is such a huge waiting list to get into local homes that most seniors are forced to travel out of their home communities to find space. In fact, it's so bad that I had one of the attending physicians in one of our local nursing homes tell me that he can't even get his own wife into that nursing home, and he has been the attending physician there for 18 years. Seniors who can no longer live in their homes deserve to be cared for as close to home as possible. Family members who are able to lend a hand with the care of their loved ones often find it impossible to travel long distances on a regular basis to provide care and support. They worry about the emotional well-being of their loved ones when they're so far away from the home and the support network they need.

The fact is, Ontario's long-term-care facilities are 99.9% full 100% of the time, and that statistic certainly rings true in my riding. If the government really wanted to help seniors, instead of Bill 2, they should build some beds in my area and across the province to provide some relief for those families who are constantly waiting and worrying about getting a spot. If they really cared about the well-being of seniors, they wouldn't have hiked their taxes, auto insurance, hydro rates, driver's-licensing fees and so on for nine years.

This bill should not be passed. It should be sent back to the government so that they go back to the drawing board and listen to all of the seniors and their families in Ontario who have been struggling under this government, and truly do what seniors need: address home care, address community care, address the health system and put some money back in seniors' pockets. Don't make them cough up \$10,000—probably their life savings—to renovate a home which they can't increase the value of. It's just ridiculous, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was interesting to listen to my colleague and some of what he had to share about his own riding. That already there are 19,000 seniors in his riding speaks volumes. This is a lot of people, and you can really see he has been in touch with a number of them, because as it is in his riding, my riding is the same. Throughout our ridings, how many people, how many seniors, have come to you and said, "I need a tax credit to renovate my home"? Frankly, Mr. Speaker, zero. How many seniors come to our offices, often with their children and often in tears, telling us that they're having a serious problem with home care, they're having a serious problem keeping one of their loved ones at home in their own home, and they're having even more of a struggle trying to find a secure long-term-care bed for them to move into?

The member uses the word "broad-based." The member from Simcoe-Grey I think described it well. This is not a bill that will have a broad-based impact. It is very narrow in its focus. It is not a priority for the majority of the seniors in his riding. I would say what he's heard from the seniors in his riding is very much in line with what I've heard from the seniors in my riding: that this is not a priority. I've never had a senior come to me and ask for a tax credit for home renovations so they can stay in their home. I have some coming to me for home care every week.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act.

We all keep on listening from demographers that Canada is an aging society. Most of us have relatives and friends and parents in that slice of the population. If we are lucky and take care of ourselves, we may reach that age ourselves. I would like to speak about the benefits of Bill 2.

Mr. Speaker, this helps seniors stay in their homes longer. This legislation, if passed, benefits taxpayers by relieving pressures on long-term-care-home costs, and this legislation, if passed, will create more than 10,000 jobs. This would also help 380,000 seniors to get the benefit of the tax credit.

Last month I was at the fun fair organized by the seniors to promote physical activity in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. They kept asking me when they could get starting the benefit of this tax credit. We have heard the NDP saying we are not doing enough, and the PCs saying we are going too far and it's a costly one. But I think it's a very balanced approach. It's a win-win situation, and I'm looking forward to passing this bill soon so that seniors in my riding can benefit from that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to respond to my colleague from Simcoe-Grey. I want to thank him for reminding people not only in this Legislature but out there in the province and TV land, those watching today, just how much, how often and how painfully this Liberal

government has inflicted itself on residents of this province, and particularly struggling seniors. My colleague went blow by blow, point by point, each time. It's great that he's got this long-term memory and he's got all these facts on hand about all of the hurt that has been brought on by this government, but I'm sure he's not working alone, because, like every other member here, we hear from our constituents on a daily basis about how they cannot tolerate this government any longer, and when you ask why, they go through the very same things that my colleague Mr. Wilson did about, "Well, this year it was the hidden hydro tax, \$53 million on our bills." Then it was the exorbitant increases because of the Green Energy Act. He talked about all of these things—and I'm pleased, Speaker, that you allowed him to talk to that, because then you have to ask yourself, is this just an attempt to try to curry a little bit of favour with those same seniors that you've been hurting for nine years, beating them over the head with a stick of taxation and fee increases and God knows what? And now you're coming back and saying, "Oh, by the way, if you're going to put in a grab bar, we're going to help you with that." I think it's too little, too late.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

M. Taras Natyshak: Merci, monsieur le Président. Je vous remercie infiniment. Je veux prendre la chance, ici, en ce moment, de parler en français. Je vais délivrer mes commentaires en français parce que je pense que j'ai dit tout ce que je peux en anglais, donc ça va me donner une chance de pratiquer, et mes amis, dans leur boîte de traduction, peuvent me suivre, j'espère.

On parle d'un projet de loi qui essaye d'aider les aînés dans la province de l'Ontario avec des renouvellements de leur maison, de leur habitation—ceux et celles qui ont des problèmes médicaux, des problèmes de mobilité, et aussi—

Interjection: Accessibilité.

M. Taras Natyshak: Accessibilité, c'est un mot français.

Ce que le gouvernement propose est un programme qui va leur donner au maximum 1 500 \$ après leurs impôts pour faire ces renouvellements—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Rénovations.

M. Taras Natyshak: Rénovations.

Ici, sur le côté néo-démocrate, on pense que ce n'est pas assez d'argent, et qu'on a besoin de faire plus pour les aînés dans cette province qui ont travaillé toute leur vie, qui ont contribué à notre province et qui ont besoin d'un gouvernement qui comprend qu'il y a des « challenges »—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Des défis.

M. Taras Natyshak: —des défis très grands dans cette province, et que le support ne va pas les assister comme le gouvernement le pense. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Merci beaucoup. The member from Simcoe-Grey has two minutes.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the honourable members from Nickel Belt, Missis-

sauga-Brampton South, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Essex for their comments.

The member from Nickel Belt made a very, very good point that very few, if any, seniors come to us asking for a tax credit for home renovations. Most of the ones I can think of over my 22 years are people who had means. They had money, so they could afford their renovations, and if the government had some program, whether it was federal or provincial, they took the grant, but they probably didn't need it. Certainly low-income seniors here and the average senior in Ontario can't afford this legislation.

It's astounding that my colleague the member for Durham brought up the fact—the fact itself is astounding, and I thank the member for Durham—that to qualify for the \$1,500, a senior citizen has to spend the full \$10,000. The maximum grant you can get is \$1,500. So the plan actually costs a senior \$8,500 to participate in Bill 2, and the catch that many of the 1.8 million seniors in Ontario probably don't realize is that if you spend the \$10,000, you'll pay \$1,400 in HST. So, at the end of the day, after the several hours of debate in this House, if you have 10,000 bucks, you'll save \$100.

But the other catch that I've pointed out, and it's been pointed out by many colleagues before me, is that your house can't increase in value. So I don't even know—are we buying ghosts here to put in your house? How are you to do renovations but your house cannot increase in value? I don't understand it, and I don't hear the government talking about that very much. It doesn't make any sense. So go back to the drawing board. Start talking about home care and stuff that's important to seniors in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you to the member from Simcoe-Grey.

The member from Huron-Bruce-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Speaker. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I know you paid particular attention to Mr. Yurek—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, exactly. I may take that over.

Speaker, it's an absolute pleasure to stand up and speak to this bill. In general, it is perceived that seniors have higher levels of disposable income, owing to greater savings and fewer expenses than current the working-age population. However, this perception is wrong for a large percentage of the population.

Here's a sobering fact. Some of the recent downturn and market turmoil is in fact melting away seniors' lifetime savings. The situation, because of the Liberal mismanagement of our economy, is getting very desperate. Seniors are coming into my office—they're in their 60s and 70s—and they're worried that they're going to run out of money, that they're not going to have the ability to stay in their homes. Those who have the option and the

ability are actually going out and getting jobs. They thought they were retired for life, but they're going out and getting jobs, because they're worried about their future. They're worried about their ability to pay their hydro bill, in fact.

The problem with this particular bill is that it's based on dubious facts and assumptions, kind of like their debt and deficit reduction projections. But that's a topic for another day; I've only got 10 minutes, and I can't come anywhere close to speaking about that boondoggle. They've created nine years of this mess; I can't fix it in 10 minutes.

The truth is that statistics show that the percentage of seniors who could benefit from this tax credit is incredibly small. Those people who have the \$10,000 don't need a tax credit to get \$1,500, and as my colleague from Simcoe-Grey says, when you factor in the HST, which equates to \$1,400, they net out at a whopping \$100. Speaker, it's just unbelievable that they actually put their precedence on this; it's crazy, in fact.

In my riding, as of 2006, there were more than 45,000 people over the age of 55 in Bruce and Grey. That accounts for one third of the county's total population. Today that number is higher by 20% in Grey county and by 11% in Bruce county. I know seniors' needs, because we have higher than the provincial average in my riding who are coming to me daily, telling me about their plight and their concerns because of this fiscal mismanagement.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's a great riding.

Mr. Bill Walker: It is a great riding. Thank you, sir.

My riding has significantly more seniors than the rest of Ontario, and many of my senior constituents have a median income just shy of \$22,000. That's less than the provincial average of \$33,000. I don't think a \$10,000 tax credit renovation project is in their midst, particularly if we factor in the \$100 net.

So rural and northern communities like Durham, Tara, Tobermory, Lions Head, Chatsworth and many, many other communities in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound paint a very different picture of the financial ability of my seniors. They're in nowhere near a position to spend \$10,000 to get back that ominous \$1,500, nor would I suggest that this is nearly as big a priority as perhaps paying their hydro bill, which is slated for a 46% increase over the next five years under this Liberal government.

Speaker, a look at affordable housing trends in Bruce and Grey proves the disconcerting fact—in fact, this holds true for the rest of the province—that the number of Ontario seniors on social housing waiting lists continues to grow. Forty thousand are seniors, according to the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association 2011 report. So this tax credit certainly won't be of much benefit to a large, large number of seniors, especially now, when they are coping with the rising cost, referenced by many of my colleagues, of their home heating bill, the thing that's a priority, a reality that they have. With temperatures starting to turn, those seniors are starting to turn their attention to, "Can I really do that?"

I don't think they're looking for the \$10,000 renovation, particularly when you can't improve your home, as my colleague from Simcoe-Grey pointed out. It kind of sounds like the way the province has ended up. They put a whole bunch of money into it and there isn't a whole lot of improvement. In fact, we're going in the wrong direction at a rapid pace.

Between low-income seniors and seniors living on austerity measures since the beginning of the economic crisis, I wonder just who is going to benefit from this tax credit. Again, very small—I mean, this is window dressing. I think my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London stated it very well: This is window dressing at its very best. It sounds good, but how much will it truly affect people's lives? How much will it really improve a large number of people across our province?

1700

We need to be talking about substantive bills. This bill is embarrassing. One of the members, I believe from Guelph, stood up and said that this was the second bill, number 2, but the first one they tabled. That was almost a year ago, and they haven't even been able to get this through the House. If it's so great, why is it not through? Why have they not used their abilities to get this through? Why are we not talking about reducing the \$15.3-billion deficit as our first priority? Why are we not talking about cutting spending so we don't double the debt in eight years, which they're on track to do?

It's really ironic that we would be talking about something here that really is just window dressing. It hits all the buzz words; it's a 30-second sound clip: "We're helping seniors." Mr. Speaker, I disagree, and many of the seniors in my riding disagree. If they were really serious, and it wasn't an election ploy like those gas plants—one of them I heard in this House today was that it's going to cost us a minimum of \$190 million. How much could that have helped our seniors? And the Oakville one I don't think has even really hit the fan yet. It's rumoured to be half a billion dollars. That money, if it wasn't wasted to save a couple of seats, could certainly be helping the multitude of seniors, like my mom, who is on a fixed income and who can't afford to spend \$10,000.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: What about the income tax reform?

Mr. Bill Walker: The income tax reform—exactly. That's another boondoggle I'm going to talk about very shortly.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. I next give to the member for Essex and the member for Scarborough East—

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Pickering-Scarborough East.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for that correction, and now my correction comes: If you want to yell across the floor at each other, go outside and do it. I don't want to hear it.

Continue.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. I'll continue to talk about the priorities of Ontarians.

We should be talking about things like debt retirement. We should be talking about how to get people back to work. There are 600,000 people unemployed, and we're talking about a seniors' tax credit that the bulk and the multitude of seniors across our province can't and won't even be thinking about. Let's be serious. They talk about this being immediate. It has been a year and they still haven't been able to. What kind of incompetence is that if you can't get a bill through in less than a year? They need to be talking about the right things; they would get to the floor of this House.

One of my colleagues astutely mentioned again that if we had these committees—if they'd been struck appropriately and in a timely manner, it might have gotten there. Now they're playing games with these committees again so they can bury a lot of the information that they don't want to truly come to light.

It's becoming a bit of a track record. Last week, we read some information about the record of LHINs. In my riding, two of 14 targets were met. If that's the level of success that they're pinning their hopes on for our great province, I am dismayed and disappointed. We need to do better. I keep hearing certain members on the opposite side of the floor saying, "We will do better." It's getting tired.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Nine years.

Mr. Bill Walker: They've had nine years.

They need to move forward with some of these bills.

Let's talk about some of the Liberal records on seniors: OHIP service cuts, the mismanagement of our province's health services and taking away a number of these programs that seniors rely on out there. The nixed lump-sum tax returns. Premier Dad decided that he would tell these seniors—who, by the way, built our great province and funded our great province—how they should manage their money: "We'll dole it out as we wish." Was that because he really believed he really was Premier Dad or because he has such a financial mess, he can't afford to pay it in any more than monthly payments? It's ridiculous. I'll give him credit: He backtracked and he came to his senses—he and the finance minister. Next year, the seniors will get back to getting the money that they actually put into the system when they deserve it.

There's more here, Speaker. Increases to seniors under the Liberal government—let's just talk a little bit. Smart meters: Hydro rates have gone up 75% under their watch, and they're actually predicting another 46% increase over the next five years. That's inexcusable and completely unrealistic. Auto insurance, the Ornge fiasco, the gas plants, which I've mentioned already: How much will these truly cost at the end of the year? The Green Energy Act: That boondoggle is going to decimate our kids for generations by the time they pay the debt off of that nightmare. eHealth, eco taxes, physio fees being cut, driver's licence fees increasing: If they really wanted to help seniors, they wouldn't have implemented any of

these things; they would have actually gone backwards and said, "We need to cut the debt so seniors can afford to stay in their homes and they're not afraid of losing their homes over their pay."

Speaker, there are 600,000 people out of work. I would suggest to you that this act is not going to do anything to truly get people back to work. It's not going to do anything to truly help those seniors stay in their homes. If you've got \$10,000, you don't need this piddly little \$100 net to actually allow you to go forward with that. I would trust that most of those people with \$10,000 in the bank are already doing it. They're not looking for this window dressing type of bill from the government; they're saying, "Do you know what? You need to address the real issues. You need to address the jobs crisis we have."

Six hundred thousand people woke up this morning without a job, and 25,000 added. Plus, they're talking about another 30,000 to 60,000 when they decimate the horse industry, although I do hold out hope. I believe that at the plowing match yesterday I heard the Premier say, "We want to make sure this industry survives; we need to do what we're going to do to ensure that industry." Then back the horse back into the barn; admit you made a colossal mistake yet again, and then we'll move on. Those seniors and those communities who will actually make some money from horse racing may be able to put it back into the economy and the things they wish to do.

Premier Dad is trying to control every part of our life. He has decimated this province over the last nine years. This bill is not going to do it. If we really need, Speaker, let's talk about some long-term-care beds that I need in my riding, not these home renovation tax credits.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Parkdale—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Would the member from Peterborough keep it down a couple of decibels? Thank you.

The member from Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened intently to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound; he makes some good points. One of the themes that came out was the lack of this government's ability to actually listen to what people need and want before implementing legislation. Had they listened to the people in Oakville and Mississauga, they would never have built these plants in the first place, which we opposed from the beginning. Now they taunt us by saying that we wanted them cancelled. Well, we never wanted them built, just like the people who lived in Oakville and Mississauga.

Ditto this bill. Had they consulted with seniors, they would have heard that seniors didn't ask for this. What they did ask for was long-term-care beds, more hours of help in those beds, home care; that's what they asked for. And they asked for help with their heating bills, something that we proposed from this side of the House and which this government refused to acknowledge.

Our seniors need affordable housing. That's something we've asked for; that's something they're not getting. He pointed out that 40,000 seniors are waiting on affordable housing lists—that, by the way, is up to around 160,000 families now, with an average wait of 10 to 12 years. That's the poverty level, and many, many of our seniors live in poverty. They don't have money for renovations of any kind. They want to pay their rent, pay their mortgage, pay their taxes, pay their hydro; they need help with all of the above, and they're not seeing it from this government.

What's the root cause, the root problem, here? This government makes decisions based on their own political agenda, the Liberal Party's agenda, and not based on the needs of the citizens of the province of Ontario. So this is a sound bite for seniors. We've had other sound bites for other groups. We had, of course, Bill 115, which was designed to win a by-election in Kitchener-Waterloo—and failed, I might say. They didn't listen to people, and they continue to not listen to people, and unfortunately—or fortunately—it may be their downfall.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise again to speak on this particular bill, Bill 2. Let me remind my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—the criticism of our government of not passing Bill 2 here. The last I recall, this is a minority government; we are supposed to work together. So your bell ringing and your delay tactics—let's get that very clear.

Let me remind the members of the House, the purpose of Bill 2 is to support seniors living at home independently and, at the same time, job creation. I recall that your party did not support the eastern Ontario development fund, so we know your position on Bill 2. You don't support job creation. You may talk from both sides of your mouth that you support employment and you support jobs; you really don't, because we know your record on supporting job creation.

My constituents from Scarborough-Agincourt, a significant portion of them seniors, live independently at home. They are keen to have this bill passed by this Legislature because they want to stay at home, living longer and living independent at their home. Many of my Chinese seniors in the riding actually live with their extended family members. This particular legislation will actually help those extended family members to renovate their homes so their grandparents and great-aunts can live in the same household.

1710

To say that we're not supporting seniors, not respecting them—that's absolutely not true. The fact is, the demographics show us that many of the population are aging. We know that by 2020 over 25% of the population will be seniors. You will never have enough long-term-care beds, and the data shows that seniors want to stay in their own homes, not in a long-term-care facility. So we need to address that issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound did a marvellous job wrapping up the many failings and faults of Bill 2.

I want to call on the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, who was talking about how in a minority Parliament we ought to be working together as she was waving and pointing her finger at people. I think working together is not the way to do it by pointing your finger. Anyway, the member for Scarborough–Agincourt has swallowed the encyclopedia of revisionist history, I guess.

Let's get back to the facts here. The fact of the matter is, this Liberal government failed to respect the electorate, failed to respect this Parliament and refused to constitute the committees in a way that represented the electorate's choice in October 2011. Their failure to respect that electorate was the cause of why the committees were not struck. It's also the cause today that the committees are still not reconstituted. When the committees are not constituted, then, of course, bills cannot go forward. Now, it's—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Order. Point of order?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Yes, I have a point of order. The member who's speaking right now is not addressing the comments made by the original speaker. I think his comments should be addressed to the Speaker, according to the standing orders, and not towards a member who's commenting on the original speaker's points. I find that to be amusing but off topic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for your point of order. It's duly noted. When I feel, as the Speaker, that he has gone too far, I'll be the first to let him know. Thank you for your point of order.

Continue, and try to walk the line.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Absolutely, Speaker.

Once again, when a member puts forward statements that are not entirely in keeping with the record, it's incumbent upon other members to shed some light, and that's what we're doing. This member from Scarborough–Agincourt provided not the complete story to the people of Ontario. We're providing the complete story.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always very enlightening and very heart-warming to stand up in the House when I hear from other MPPs in their areas—how they're engaging their communities, their constituents, the people who walk their streets.

I just wanted to touch on the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—it's nice to hear that some of the issues that are going on in your area are very similar to what's going on in Algoma–Manitoulin.

The member from Simcoe–Grey also talked about issues that are going on in his area. Those issues are also going on in Algoma–Manitoulin.

The member from Nickel Belt, whom I'm very familiar with—we've talked about this issue. She brought up issues that are very similar that are going on in her area as are going on in Algoma–Manitoulin.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: The issues that he brought up during the earlier discussions about this bill are also going on in Algoma–Manitoulin.

It's very heartening for me to hear that this message is going on throughout Ontario. The point that I'm trying to make is that the more we talk about it, the more that we bring these issues up as far as being common throughout the entire province, hopefully that message will carry across.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't think so.

Interjection: I doubt it.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm an optimistic person. I believe we're all here to try and do the greater good for the entire province—not just some of them, but all of them.

A lot of the issues that I hear as well through this whole process is that we're not hearing that individuals want the credits. What I'm hearing is, people are giving me the difficult stories that they built this entire province. They've worked at this entire province and they want to benefit by staying at home, but they're having problems doing that when their energy bills are increasing and when their MPAC assessments are doubling.

We need to move forward with this. It's a good initiative, but let's tackle the real issues of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has two minutes.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the members from Parkdale–High Park, Scarborough–Agincourt, Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and Algoma–Manitoulin.

I think the speaker from Parkdale–High Park hit it right on the head: The lack of ability of the Liberal government to listen is what got us into this. The gas plants are a prime example. Just think of the money that's going to be wasted: \$190 million to start; it will probably hit \$1 billion. And how much of that is helping our seniors across this wonderful province? We need money. That money could be going to long-term and home care rather than to something like this and the waste that they're doing.

Let's talk about the real needs of seniors. Let's talk about reducing hydro rates that are exorbitant, and they're worried about not being able to turn on the heat. Let's talk about the debt retirement fees that they continue to charge but are not there. Let's talk about the HST.

She talked about minority government working together. I would suggest that our colleagues in the NDP caucus and in ours talked about the HST, and in fact I think outvoted the government, but they just didn't listen to that one. And I think in the horse racing there's a pretty similar example.

Speaker, they talked about—and I was pointed at, which in my view is a lack of respect for me, and I won't

do that. I'll rise above that. But I will point out that I won't stand here and be lectured about things like job creation when they have 600,000 people that are unemployed and 60,000 to be added to that from the horse racing, and a \$15.3-billion deficit and a \$411-billion debt that they've doubled in eight years.

They talk about respect. What about, before this House—we were talking about contempt of the Legislature. How about respect there? How about a Premier and a health minister who will not come before that committee, even though they said that if it was the will of this House—they will not do that. Please don't lecture me in the future about your glaring track record on some of these issues. We need to be talking about seniors. We need to care about those seniors who truly can't pay their bills because of the fiscal mismanagement and the mess you've made of our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Harris: It's my pleasure today to speak to Bill 2, Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act. I will tell you that I did have a great opportunity, not only last October, to speak to many seniors in their homes while campaigning in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, but more recently as well in the recent by-elections. It did happen in the summer. They said they weren't going to happen until the fall, but nonetheless, we did catch a few seniors at home and had a great opportunity to listen to some of the concerns that those folks have at the door, the real concerns that they have at the door, talking about some of the costs that are hitting them. I think we've talked and heard about it many times: the fact that hydro continues to increase here in Ontario. Many seniors are in fact afraid of opening up their hydro bills at the end of the month. One man was literally shaking as if he was—it was like a young lad getting his cellphone bill for the first time. You just never know what happens with a cellphone bill.

And we brought those concerns back. I think you've heard my colleague speak to many of those and the fact that we've actually explained to the government time and time again that this bill doesn't actually benefit Ontarians but in fact rather misleads them, I'll say.

If I must applaud the government for one thing—and I will do just one thing today—that would be for their crafty public relations strategies. They're great at branding these bills: fancy, really fresh names to attract votes, of course, but they're really, really good at hiding that fine print—great names, but the fine print is what you need to read. In fact, back to Bill 2, like I said, it actually says one thing but means quite the other. The name suggests that anyone can qualify for a tax credit to renovate their home. That couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, the bill, as written, applies only to seniors or children living with their parent over the age of 65 who can afford to spend up to \$10,000 on very specific types of renovations.

The government is trying to make people believe this bill will make it affordable for seniors who are struggling

to stay in their own homes, but that is simply not true. This bill gives seniors a tax credit of 15% on home renovations to a maximum of \$1,500 a year. That means the senior is still responsible for 85% of the costs. On renovations of \$10,000, a senior will have to pay \$8,500. Now, if the renovation costs \$20,000, that would be over the maximum and the senior would then have to pay \$18,500. For many seniors this is simply not an option; it's unaffordable. Who has \$18,500 these days to be renovating their homes, especially seniors, who, again, are complaining about just rising utility costs each and every month?

1720

For those wealthy seniors, they can already afford to make these renovations and won't necessarily need a tax credit anyways. For seniors who live on a pension and within a budget, they will most likely not be able to come up with the 85%. Those who struggle with paying their hydro bills, as I have mentioned, will be focused on spending their money elsewhere—just the basic necessities to allow them to stay in their own home.

You know, my constituents want their hard-earned dollars to go to the right place. Bill 2 will continue to focus attention away from the seniors who need it most rather than implementing effective, bold plans that reduce the cost and size of government and deliver public services on the front line where they are needed the most.

In fact, just today—I'll comment quickly on my colleague's hard work—a constituent of mine was in my office, a family; he is undergoing prostate cancer treatments with a drug, Zytiga, I believe: expensive treatments per month, scraping together every last penny they have to be able to afford this life-saving treatment for folks with prostate cancer. I'll commend my colleague sitting beside me from Huron—Bruce, who took bold action and wrote the Ombudsman to lobby for those men suffering from prostate cancer. We'd like to give special credit to her but also those gentlemen out there who now will be able to continue to afford this treatment and this, I take it, drug that will increase their lives, and those who just simply want to stay at home. Thank you for that.

I just talked about seniors living on a pension. You know what? They have to live within a budget, of course.

They've got to take care of home services—I'm talking home care services—and bring those dollars back to the front lines instead of the bloating bureaucracy that we've seen recently, whether it be with Ornge or eHealth. You know what? We're up to now \$2.4 billion on eHealth and yet five million Ontarians still don't have an electronic health record today. And the 1.2 million folks who suffer from diabetes were hoping that this new diabetes online registry would be, I believe, in effect as of last year. It wasn't; it was delayed. Just recently, in fact today, eHealth and the Liberal government announced that they would be discontinuing that agreement with CGI. So unfortunately, those 1.2 million Ontarians who suffer from diabetes will be further set back.

So, as I had mentioned, my colleagues here on this side in the PC Party, as well as the NDP, have been

calling for more transparency and accountability in government. In fact, I'll thank those folks. Last week, I tabled my bill, Transparency in Government Bills Act, Bill 109, that had the support of the third party, and I'd like to thank them for that, because this government's track record is very much the opposite in terms of being transparent. They continue to hide the required documentation from the people of Ontario and avoid following the rules in this Legislature. Last week, we heard a lengthy ruling from the Speaker on the Minister of Energy, and the path continues.

In fact, just today the Environmental Commissioner said that this government lacks transparency, and almost used the word "contempt," in allowing Ontarians to provide feedback on the Environmental Bill of Rights. So, you know, this is an emerging trend with this government and it's very, very troubling. But since, obviously, the government decided not to support my bill, the government transparency act, through a proper cost-benefit analysis, I'd like to walk Bill 2 through a cost-benefit analysis. Then maybe we can put it to rest, once we realize the cost and benefits of Bill 2. So column one, the cost; column two, the benefits.

I'll begin with the costs.

First, a senior must front the money to renovate their home. In fact, we've found that the people who really need the help to make their home healthier and safer don't have the money to qualify for this tax credit. This means that a senior making \$25,000 must spend up to 40% of their income on home renovations to get less than 1% of their total income back. In a senior's pocketbook, this is a huge cost.

Cost 2: Recall back to the Drummond report—that's the Liberals' hand-picked economist who brought a report out, a long-awaited report. In fact, the Drummond commission made it painfully clear that Ontario is in the mess we're in today because the government has failed to keep spending in line with revenues. The fact that we continue to debate the bill of this Parliament—the government continues to spend money rather than coming up with bold ideas that actually work, like taking the HST off people's hydro bills, that we talked about in the last campaign. This would actually provide the relief to Ontarians who need it the most.

Cost 3: Thanks to the Liberals' HST, half the tax credit actually goes to cover the increased taxes on home renovations. Even if a senior applies for the tax credit, they will only get enough to pay for the increased cost of the HST, which you could classify as a benefit in the short run, I guess. But when you look deeper into the scenario, the cost outweighs the benefit. The HST increased the cost of tons of products and services. Some of these items have become so expensive for seniors that the money they would otherwise have spent on replacements and renovations around the home now goes to taxes, the taxman—we all know who that is—so that your government can debate on bills like this for far too long. It's so long that almost a year after the Premier promised seniors, on the campaign trail, that they should

go ahead and spend their savings on renovations—they didn't warn those seniors that almost a year after they spent the money, the bill still wouldn't be passed.

Very few low-income seniors can afford to do renovations not knowing whether they would qualify and then have to wait a year for the money. Having it retroactive to last year is really only benefiting those who can actually afford to do the renovations.

You've forced the cost of hydro up by 8%, and taxes, with extensive, expensive green energy experiments. You've revealed that the cost of energy is set to go up 150%. You're making the cost of living simply unaffordable for my constituents in Kitchener–Conestoga and for the rest of Ontarians. Therefore, these costs far outweigh any benefits. In fact, when I have the opportunity—and I continually have the opportunity when I get back into my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga—to speak to them, they don't believe that when government gets bigger, it actually becomes more helpful.

I have a few more comments. I know I'm running out of time here, so I'll have a seat. I've got lots more here on the next round of questioning. I'll turn it over to my colleague—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to speak to the remarks of the member from Kitchener–Conestoga and to spend more time talking about seniors. He spent time since the election last October, as have I, talking to seniors. I knocked on some doors in the by-election too, talking to seniors close to his region.

Speaker, the cost of heating is a big concern for seniors across the province. The cost of hydro is a big concern for seniors across the province, probably a bigger concern than Bill 2. It's an honour for me, but it's also a responsibility for me to speak on behalf of the seniors in my riding. Last October, one of their biggest issues was home heating, because we heat with oil. Most seniors in our riding don't have access to natural gas, which is much cheaper. But even that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Well, folks, it's you again. I can't hear the speaker. When your speaker was speaking, they were quiet. Everybody is talking over the person that's speaking. Once again, could we please keep it down? Last warning—I'm going to start naming people.

Continue.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker.

One thing has changed considerably in my riding since last October. On September 28, seniors and disabled people will no longer have access to public train transportation in my riding. People like Roslyn Shirley, Lise Lachapelle and Aline Benedetti, who have to come to Toronto for medical treatments, will now have to spend hours on a bus. No more public train transportation—that's their biggest issue—and the seniors in my riding have yet to hear an answer from this government on how that is going to be replaced. Put your mother or your

grandmother on a bus for 10 hours for cancer treatment or for a hip replacement, or for anything like that, and call that Ontario.

1730

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order from the member from Nepean.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. I have to correct my record. Earlier in debate, I believe I referred to this bill as Bill 75, but it is Bill 2. So I'd like to correct my record to reflect that this is Bill 2, not Bill 75. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you; duly noted.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It was truly a delight to listen to the remarks from my good friend from Kitchener-Conestoga. It's interesting: I was at the IPM yesterday in Roseville, and of course, there were a number of displays. In fact, Home Hardware had a number of displays at the IPM yesterday. I had the opportunity to chat with seniors there—a wonderful lunch at lunchtime, another opportunity to chat with seniors. Some of them were particularly interested in Bill 2. They were wondering when the filibuster was going to—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Point of order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Earlier, there was a reference to being on the subject of what the speakers were talking about and, of course, what the bill before the House is. I don't believe there's a bill about the IPM on the floor of the House at present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Actually, he was talking about the International Plowing Match—he people he met there. That's not a point of order.

Continue.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your ruling on that point of order, but let me be more specific.

Just a week ago, I had the opportunity to go by Anden Kitchen and Bath on Lansdowne Street West, operated by a good friend, Vance Robbins, who used to coach my son in baseball. He's got a big sign up there that says, "The fall is a good time to do renovations." I thought, "My goodness. Vance and his team of tradespeople there"—it's a wonderful company, right beside Peterborough Dodge Chrysler, another great organization in Peterborough. I know they're anticipating the demand. As soon as we get Bill 2 passed, the number of seniors who will be going in to see Vance and his team, asking him for renovation plans to make their bathtubs and their homes more accessible for seniors—those seniors who lack mobility and have some challenges getting into their bathtubs, have some challenges with their kitchens etc.—they're looking forward. It has been estimated that some 380,000 people may take advantage of this particular initiative that we have proposed.

Hopefully, the filibuster will stop, we'll get this bill passed and everybody will get to Anden Kitchen and Bath.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I've heard, throughout the debate this afternoon, some very good points made on this side of the chamber. My esteemed colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound alluded to the simple fact that this does nothing for the seniors who need it most.

Again, when I was talking to the bill earlier, when I'm out door-knocking in my community, the great riding of Northumberland-Quinte West, I listen to what the seniors have to say. I can honestly say I have not heard one senior on the street or call my office or call me at home and say that this is something that is imperative: "I need this in order to stay in my home"—not one, Mr. Speaker; not one. Yet my esteemed colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound pointed to the fact that these seniors need help to stay in their homes. This is not the way to go about it. They're forced to pay an exuberant amount of money for their property taxes and their skyrocketing hydro and home heating.

This is where this government has been sort of misleading the people, saying that they are trying to help seniors when, in fact, that's not the case, not just in Northumberland-Quinte West but across this great province of Ontario. I stand here today saying that this is a piece of legislation that does nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sorry for being slow in reacting there.

It's always nice to hear a lot of the comments that are being made.

I can stand here proudly and say that I don't need a lecture in regard to how we can work together in this House. I think that I, along with my colleagues here, have demonstrated to the entire province and to all Ontarians what it actually takes to build those bridges in order to get certain things accomplished, to have those tough discussions in regard to moving the sticks forward, opening up the doors to make sure that what Ontarians are expecting us to do here and the goals they've sent us here for get accomplished for them.

I can stand here proudly with my colleagues and say that not all the members in here, but some of the members that are in here, and all of the members within our caucus, are actually doing that. I'm very proud to look across the way at some of my colleagues in our neighbouring caucus. I'm sure they have their hearts and their minds in the right direction as far as what it takes to get certain things accomplished. So I can certainly stand here and say I don't need to be lectured in regard to what it takes to be working together in order to get things accomplished.

I can proudly stand here and say, on behalf of the people of Algoma-Manitoulin, that I know what they need, as far as what they need as seniors. It's not going to

be a handle in the shower that's going to help them through the tough times we're going through. Those are not the answers they're looking for. The answers that they're looking for are getting the HST removed off their hydro bill and getting the home care that they need. Those are the tough issues that we really need to handle, and working together, we'll get that done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener—Conestoga has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to obviously recognize the folks who lent their voices to the discussion on Bill 2. Of course, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, the member opposite from Peterborough and the member for Northumberland—Quinte West, I do appreciate your comments.

I just want to build upon, obviously, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin's comment on working together. Not only do we want to work together, but I think it's every member's intent in this Legislature to be able—to want—to help seniors, especially seniors who want to stay and live in their own homes for as long as possible. Truly, the problem with this particular bill, Bill 2, is that the people who actually need the help the most won't benefit from this bill.

Members on this side of the House obviously believe that rather than implementing a tax credit that barely covers the increased cost of the sales tax, Ontarians would be better off if the government took a better look at policy to improve the lives of our seniors, especially those who want to remain in their own homes. In fact, it saddens me that seniors fear opening up that hydro bill each and every month to find yet another heightened hydro bill. I opened mine last month, and it was well over \$300. We weren't operating any differently, but it was rather expensive. I can only imagine some of those seniors living on a fixed income—seeing their faces after they've opened up their hydro bills.

At the end of the day, seniors want a government that actually works for them and is governing this province on good policy, not obviously strategizing on public relations antics.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity to speak to this bill and to speak to the many seniors in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga. I hope I have lent my voice to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I welcome and appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 2. I actually had to take a second look, a double take. Bill 2 goes back to sometime last fall, just after the election, and just suggests to me the low priority that the Liberals opposite have attributed to this proposed legislation.

1740

It's titled the healthy homes renovation tax credit. We're going almost a year now; today is September 19. I guess, if anything, it allows us a bit of an opportunity to generate some discussion of how we can be better enabled to provide legislation and provide services for

seniors, for all seniors, and in particular seniors who, with age, are developing mobility problems, have trouble functioning in a home, and in particular those seniors who are disabled—may well have been disabled for a number of years—but we have to do this in a cost-effective manner. There has to be a plan that has to be managed. You're not going to accomplish much with these kinds of one-off grants and loans and piecemeal projects that come out. A lot of people don't even hear about them, and then they're over with by the time the word gets out.

You know, to do this properly, we have to focus—we all have to focus. There's no doubt that this province is facing some very serious economic realities. This government alone is facing some very serious fiscal realities, and for that reason, focus—focus and refocus and concentrate. Concentrate on provincial services in the areas we are talking about here: seniors and people with disability issues. Focus on the old, focus on the sick, focus on the disabled, focus on people who have a real need.

We know the state of the economy. We've seen the crushing impact of Ontario's economic decline. The province is obviously overtaxed. It has a spending problem; it does not have a revenue problem. It does not have a revenue problem yet, anyway, and we are staring down the barrel of unsustainable debt. As well—and we all know this as parliamentarians—people, particularly taxpayers, are demanding a much better return on their tax deposits to this particular government. On the same hand—and this certainly is evident when we're back in our constituency offices—there's yet a continued and never-ending, growing list of wants and needs from people. This tax credit falls in that category.

So how best to make decisions with respect to the allocation of what are very clearly scarce budget resources—this is our quest in debating this particular legislation—while at the same time acknowledging our shared responsibility to help those who are truly in need? And again, I think of seniors with a disability. They are struggling, through no fault of their own, and it's clearly incumbent on all of us—it's incumbent on government—to reach out and provide the support in a fair and accountable manner, while fostering as best we can—and it is difficult when money gets shovelled out the door—individual responsibility through as many people as possible.

This legislation, the healthy homes renovation tax credit, proposes to provide support through a new permanent, refundable personal income tax credit, assisting with the cost of permanent home modifications that improve accessibility or help a senior to be more functional and more mobile in their home. If that were the end of the story, Speaker, if this bill could be taken at face value, then I would have no problem supporting this proposed legislation. However, on further examination, it really does become clear that if the aim of this bill is to help seniors—to help all seniors—it fails miserably. If the aim of this bill is to help those in Ontario with

disabilities, it is not up to the mark. As has been explained this afternoon, it's only available—in fact, this was explained last year—to help a certain number of individuals, a certain number of seniors, if they have a certain amount of money, anywhere up to \$10,000 to spend on renovations. Specifically, this is because of the fact that the bill benefits only a tiny segment of the population, if they even hear about the opportunity, if this thing does come to fruition.

The fact is, Speaker, that while this government may have in mind something like 1.8 million seniors, and these people, if the word does get out on this legislation—I don't think anybody has really heard about it yet. It has been over a year and actually was raised by the government as a potential vote-getter in the election. If you've got 1.8 million seniors believing they're going to get \$1,500 from the government to make their homes more accessible—most of them, unfortunately, won't qualify financially for the \$1,500 maximum credit in the first place. For \$1,500—that's the credit you get—you've got to run up a reno bill of something like \$10,000.

I think of seniors who contact my office looking for advice, looking for support. Most would not be expecting or in any way would be prepared to shell out 10 grand to get 15% back or get the \$1,500 back. Poor seniors, low-income seniors, the ones who are in the most urgent need of government support to increase accessibility, would be no more readily able to pay \$8,500 of the \$10,000 to even get through the door of this healthy homes program.

If you look at the numbers, it doesn't seem to add up. The median income for those 1.8 million seniors in Ontario is something like \$25,000 a year, or \$45,000 for a couple. Who among us—who in that category would be able to shell out half of our income for needed renovations? How do you expect seniors to pay \$10,000 on a \$25,000 median income? Meanwhile, while increasing accessibility and mobility is clearly a priority as one gets older, to be sure, but what of those seniors who have other deficiencies in their homes that they would like to spend some money on?

Homes get older, Speaker, just like people do. Periodically, you need a new roof; you need a new chimney. You've got to put fresh gravel down on your driveway. You deal with increasingly inefficient windows, furnaces, the jacking up of energy bills to levels beyond the means of someone particularly on a fixed income, and I bet a dollar to a doughnut that anybody here who knocked on doors in the last election heard about the problems paying the bills and heard about the problems paying the electricity bills. These are the kinds of issues I was hearing about.

My question: How does the healthy homes legislation help in these situations? It doesn't apply. It's not going to help out with an electricity bill.

Mr. Mario Sergio: You've got to have an open mind, my friend.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I don't know what that comment was about. We could maybe put that in Hansard and figure it out later.

Instead of providing a real hand up for seniors and their housing concerns, what I see is a somewhat weak-kneed, vacuous approach, a healthy homes approach. I guess the government felt they could play up their support for seniors while ignoring the fact that there is little of that actual support forthcoming. I put it down in the category of window dressing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I couldn't resist the opportunity to comment on the member from Haldimand-Norfolk. I think he summed up everything that people are thinking here today. He realizes that this is actually a bit of a shell game.

Mr. Toby Barrett: It's a sham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I didn't say that, but it's possibly the right word.

1750

Here's the issue; here's how cynical things are. Some people will recall that the Liberals have what they call a trillium tax credit. I'd like you to pay attention. They have the trillium tax credit. Mr. Speaker, you know that used to be paid out in a lump sum. All of us in the House, if you're listening to your constituents at all, you know that they were very upset that you stopped paying it—I see Mr. Leal nodding—in a lump sum. That lump sum used to go towards—member from Haldimand-Norfolk—those jobs that come up every once in a while: getting the driveway paved, fixing the chimney, getting a new furnace. What happened?

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Listen up. The member from Peterborough, you need to listen more. Here's the issue: They realized they've made a mistake because they didn't consult with people. This is a contradiction, because this was the very thing that would have helped in this case of doing home renovations, the lump sum payment. But what they've done now is they've come up with this new game, which is a game. They've only allotted, I think, \$60 million to it, which is over a couple of years. And he said it very clearly: The average income is something under \$25,000 for a lot of these families. They're still taxing them on this income. Now, if you spend \$1,000, you're going to pay \$130 in tax—13%—and they're going to give you back 10%. So you've spent \$130 on tax on the \$1,000. It's disgusting; it's a sham.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to make a few comments on the presentation by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk. Let me say that it seems, by listening to the members on the other side, that there is ample support for the bill. If that is the case indeed, then I think we should move this bill forward as quickly as possible. There is no reason to delay it any more because we've already had, if I'm right, some 28 hours of debate. If they are saying they agree, even though it does not help all the seniors, then I think we should move on the bill and

make it law so those 380,000 seniors could benefit from the content of this bill.

I call on the members of the House, Speaker. We already had 28 hours of debate, so let's move the bill forward. Let's give a chance to the seniors who want to stay in their house longer and enjoy the privacy and comfort of their own homes, give them that possibility.

We all know in the House that not every bill that we approve in this House benefits 100% of our Ontario people. These benefits are particularly addressed to those seniors and those family members that want to continue to live more comfortably in their homes.

The fact is that this is a benefit that is renewable year after year, so as there is a need and there's the possibility of correcting and making their lives more accessible to live in their own homes, this bill provides that facility. And I think we shouldn't be losing sight of the fact that if there are 387,000 seniors, then we should be doing this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Once again it's a pleasure to speak to, as I referred to earlier, Bill 2. Our caucus is enjoying having the fulsome debate that is required for this piece of legislation. As you are aware, Speaker, the reason we are in this assembly is because we debate issues of the day.

Now, as I stated when it was my opportunity to address this piece of legislation back a week ago, this bill was named Bill 2, the second piece of legislation put forward—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The two members on that side, if you'd like to speak, you usually stand up, but it appears you're standing up talking. All right? Either sit down or go outside and talk.

Continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. I know this isn't exactly on topic, but I want to warn the new member from Vaughan that he is with the member from Durham, and I know you're from opposite sides, but if you learn from the member from Durham you're going to be in a lot of trouble from the Speaker if that continues. I've known this member for a great number of years and I admire and respect him. However, he could get a newer member in trouble, so I warn you on that.

As I've stated numerous times in this House, Bill 2 was the second piece of legislation put forward by the McGuinty government after it assumed office once again in 2011—second piece of legislation. The first is not really a piece of legislation we debate; it is the ancient right of Parliament that we put forward, and it lies here in perpetuity until the House falls and we go into an election.

Bill 2: Eleven months later, we're still debating this legislation. This is apparently a priority of the government to help seniors. Well, that's not what the will of the House is. The will of the House was to support seniors by

removing the HST off of home heating. That was the first piece of legislation that passed this House. Of course, it came from our friends over at the NDP. My good friend from Algoma-Manitoulin put forward the legislation, and we supported it in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party. We still maintain that that would have been the opportunity that we could have used here in this assembly, and that's why we cannot, at this point in time, continue to support this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: At this late hour and after having spoken so many times, it's not quite a pleasure anymore to speak to the healthy homes renovation tax credit.

But there's one thing that struck me from the member from York West: that we should get on with it, and it could help so many seniors. But if this bill goes ahead, what it should say when the PR comes forward, the ads, is, "Help for select seniors."

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, really. Then, you know what? I'm going to be stuck, and we're all going to be stuck with, "I'm sorry, ma'am, but you don't qualify." You know what? That's the problem with a lot of this—I'm new here. A lot of us are new here. But that's a problem with a lot of this legislation: The big headline sounds a lot better than what's actually happening. If you show us the numbers, that 380,000 seniors can actually pay for this and still pay for their heat and still pay for vegetables, then you know what? Then you've done your job. But just to shove numbers out—380,000 seniors and—a lot of seniors who are still in their own homes have trouble paying for groceries, have trouble paying for heat, and something like the HST coming off would make a bigger difference to them than having to borrow \$10,000 to basically get their HST back.

Please, when this bill, if it passes—please make it "Help for select seniors," seniors who could afford it in the first place. Then we've all done our jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Haldimand-Norfolk has two minutes.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, the member for Durham made reference to this debate and that what's going on here is a bit of a shell game. I maybe wouldn't use those words. I would use the word "sham" or "show and tell." In fact, I really consider this more than a sham. I think it goes beyond a sham or a game. I think the member from Durham referred to the word "game." It goes beyond that: a sham and illusion in my mind.

Why would I refer to this as a show and a sham? The reason we're debating yet again more spending on a program whose efficacy is somewhat suspect I think can be summed up in a couple of numbers. One number that comes to mind: \$411.4 billion. Everyone in this House knows that is the debt projected by Don Drummond for the year 2017-18. The other number that comes up: \$30.2 billion, the deficit projected, again for that same time period. This is a spend bill.

I appreciated the comments. The member from York West said, "Well, there's no reason to delay it anymore." We do question why the government delayed it for so long. This is a government bill. We wonder what happened here. It's something that was introduced last fall.

Further to that, the member for Nepean—Carleton, first of all, had to talk about the member for Durham. But she made reference to Bill 1, the ancient parliamentary right. Bill 2 is essentially Bill 1; 2 is 1.

The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane alluded to the lengthy debate. We recognize that. He also alluded—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Première session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 20 September 2012

Jeudi 20 septembre 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 September 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 septembre 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WIRELESS SERVICES AGREEMENTS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LES CONVENTIONS DE SERVICES SANS FIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 13, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / Projet de loi 82, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity and recognizing me to speak on Bill 82, a bill which is, I think, extremely important and has created quite a buzz out there in the broader community. I'll speak to it in a moment.

But let me start by congratulating the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, the Minister of Consumer Services, for her leadership on this particular bill, for bringing such a comprehensive piece of legislation forward in the Ontario Legislature; and also the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who brought forward a private member's bill initially in this regard and obviously worked very hard in terms of the research he did in putting together a private member's bill and then, of course, working with the government and working with the Minister of Consumer Services and convincing her that this is the right thing to do. So a big hats off to the member from Sault Ste. Marie, as well, for his leadership on this issue.

This is something that I've been quite interested in for some time. In fact, strangely enough, I was doing a fair bit of research on this particular issue as well and was starting the process of drafting it before the member from

Sault Ste. Marie's bill came forward, which I was very happy to see. Therefore, needless to say, I 100% agree and support this bill. This is a very important step in the right direction to protect consumers who use wireless technologies. Now I say wireless technologies because we're not just talking about cellphones anymore. We've got all kinds of smart products that we use, from BlackBerrys to iPhones, but iPads now and other kinds of tablets which have become so commonplace, of such common usage in our daily lives.

I remember very distinctly when I got my first cellphone. The first cellphone I got was in 2000. I went all through university without owning a cellphone, because there was no need for it—no need whatsoever. It was back in 2000, and I was in the process of becoming a young lawyer and I felt that for my professional purposes I would need a cellphone. I still remember that particular device: very limited in functionality from today's standards and a little bulkier than what we are used to today, but obviously it did the job of making phone calls. I'm sure if I look in my basement, I'll still find that phone somewhere, sitting in the bottom of a box, just for nostalgic purposes.

But after that, I have entered in many, many cellphone contracts. I have had my share of stories and will talk a little bit about them. I'm sure we can all share stories when it comes to contracts relating to cellphones or wireless technology, when it comes to the so-called cell shock we get when we see the bill and see charges that we don't understand and don't know what they mean. You call the various telecommunication companies, and you get different answers in that regard.

You know, one of the stories I remember—an issue that is squarely dealt with in Bill 82—was dealing with cancellation charges. I got a BlackBerry for myself, one of those old, bulkier types. I signed on. I was asked to sign on for a four-year contract; I'm sure we're all used to that. I figured this was appropriate. The contract, I recall, was extremely convoluted—and the nature of those contracts has not changed, by the way. I'm a lawyer by profession. I like to read these contracts; I like to read the fine points. But when you're standing in a store in a mall, be it owned by a large telecommunications company or one of those affiliates or subsidiary retail stores, you really don't have time to read through the multiple pages of a contract. In fact, the deal is apparently so good that you've got to sign on today to get it. What happens is that people do sign on.

The nature of consumers, when it comes to use of cellphones, has changed. I was talking about getting one

myself in 2000; I was almost 30 years old at that time. Now, young children have cellphones—not only cellphones; they have smart-phone devices. A lot of times, parents are the ones getting it for them. Teenagers are procuring these by themselves. I'm sure that if we did a quick survey right now, most of our pages in the Legislature have cellphones. They really don't have the knowledge, the know-how or perhaps the capacity to understand these very lengthy contracts, and I was a victim of the same thing.

I signed this contract; it seemed pretty simple to me at the time. But through circumstances beyond my control, when two years later I needed to get out of that contract, well, guess what? Now, two years in the cellphone world, you will recall, are leap years, because the technology is changing so fast, and the product you've got in hand is of no value whatsoever. So two years later, when I was trying to get out of the cellphone—because of an employment situation I was getting a phone etc.—well, you can, yes, but the cost was over \$400 in penalty costs, over \$400 for me to get out of that contract with a phone that was really of no use. It was old technology.

My story, I'm sure, is not unique to what others out in the community have experienced. This particular bill really deals with that issue and puts limits on cellphone carrier companies as to how much they can charge in terms of cancellation or termination charges—a very important step.

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It also requires that cellphone agreements be written in plain language so everyone can understand what they are agreeing to. That's absolutely essential when it comes to transparency, when it comes to protecting consumers—no doubt about it. I do not understand why cellphone contracts have to be more complicated and written in such a small, fine font size than when purchasing a car. It seems like purchasing a car is a far more straightforward process, which is a far more expensive purchase one will make in their lifetime than a cellphone, which has more now become a necessity of life, a regular thing that we all have on a daily basis.

These two pieces alone, which are outlined in this legislation, are extremely important. First, that contracts be written in plain language, that they really clearly outline in plain English—or French, I'm assuming—the terms and conditions in a contract so that the consumer, when he or she is purchasing or renting this product, is clear as to the conditions they're agreeing to. Second, I think it is imperative, which is very much part of this legislation, that there be caps on the termination or cancellation fees, that there be a fair mechanism, a fair method, to calculate these termination fees so you're not running into the kind of situation that I ran into, of paying in excess of \$400 in termination fees—which, by the way, I did pay. Was I happy or pleased about it? Absolutely not. But there was no way out of the agreement unless I wanted to keep that phone for another two years and not use it but still pay certain basic fees attached to it, which are fairly hefty as well.

Two of the pieces that I'll speak of which are important in this agreement—one is the need for express consent. If you are going to purchase a new device and going to sign for it, there needs to be express consent; you shall know all the terms and conditions. Or, if your contract is being extended, it should not happen without your express consent. It should not be one of those negative billing options. Remember those, Speaker, which were introduced some time ago: "If we don't hear from you, you'll get this whole package and you'll get a bill for it"? No, no, no. I think we live in a world, we live in a time and place where people are mindful, people know what they want, and laws and rules should require that there be express consent relating to that—and of course, again, related in plain language so that they can understand what they're consenting to. To me, that's just good business practice.

Deceiving people—any company engaging in that type of practice—is alienating consumers. There are enough choices now. There are enough options out there for you to shop around. So from a business point of view, if I was one of these companies, I would embrace these changes wholeheartedly, because it's only going to make you that much more attractive to consumers out there, who are looking for hassle-free services in their lives. So I really hope and I really think that businesses, the telecommunication companies, are receptive to these changes and are welcoming of these changes. In fact, I hope they adopt these things even before it becomes law, because it just makes sense. Express consent before renewing, extending or amending a fixed-term contract is a step in the right direction. It's something which is extremely important, and I very much support that it is part of this bill.

The other piece I really like, which I think is a source of large confusion, is all-inclusive pricing. Again, we see these ads—if you look at today's newspaper, they're probably half a page or a full page—from various telecommunications companies offering their products. Like I said, I think it is my legal training, or maybe I have just too much time on my hands—

Interjection.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: —it's the latter, I guess—but I like to read the fine print. I like to see what those asterisks or those little crosses or those little squares mean. That's a lawyer thing, I guess. If you notice, at the bottom of those advertisements there is this minute, minute writing.

Mr. Rob Leone: Two-point font.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Maybe less than two-point font. The member from Cambridge is saying "two-point font"—I think it's sometimes less—which outlines all the real stuff. Even somebody with good vision cannot read this unless they have a magnifying glass. What are you trying to hide? There's no need to hide anything. Let's get that out in public; it's just good business practice.

Having a provision that requires all-inclusive pricing, where you know exactly what you're purchasing, what the cost is, with all the bells and whistles you may want, is a good thing. It will make for better decision-making by consumers, and I think it's extremely important that

we require that, as opposed to getting that surprise or so-called cell shock when you get the bill. "Oh, you didn't realize there's a price for X, there's a price for Y and there's a cost for Z." It just does not make sense; it is bad business practice. I think it's deceiving to consumers. Requiring in law, as in this legislation, Bill 82, that there be all-inclusive pricing is very much a step in the right direction.

For all those reasons, I think this is a good bill. I'm really hopeful that all the members in this Legislature will support this bill, because I think these are the kinds of things that we, as a Legislature, need to do to protect our consumers on a daily basis.

I have to say that since this bill was tabled—in fact, the private member's bill and then the government bill—I've been hearing a lot of support in this regard in my riding of Ottawa Centre. In fact, I started a petition in support, and I have received hundreds, if not thousands, of signatures from folks in my community of Ottawa Centre saying, "Yes, we need more consumer protection. Yes, we need more transparency in this regard."

Just this past Saturday, I was in the Wellington West village part of my riding. There's a great event called Taste of Wellington West that takes place in the riding every fall, where all the businesses come out and sell their goods and have little treats and whatnot. It's a great family-friendly event—it was a beautiful sunny day. I always have a community tent set up during that event, an opportunity for me to speak with constituents and give them information about consumer protection and other things their government is doing on their behalf, so that they know.

So this issue came up. I had the petition, and a lot of people signed on to that petition. But what I wanted to tell you is that somebody called me from the street. It was a gentleman on a bicycle; I can't remember his name right now. He stopped me and said, "Where's that bill on cellphones?"

I said, "Actually, it's going through second reading debate. In fact, I'll be speaking to it on Thursday morning."

He said, "You know, I'm very supportive of this. Let me know if I can help in any way, because this is something that we need."

You know, you rarely get that kind of endorsement on a particular bill. People really don't pay attention to these types of things. But for somebody to stop me on the street and say, "I support it. Tell me what I can do. I have a blog. I have a website. I would like to write about this"—I'm hoping that he and I will be able to connect, to speak on how we can ensure that people are making smart decisions, and how we can make sure that people do have information at their disposal so they can make decisions, especially on things like acquisition of cellphone services.

Like I said, these are nothing unique anymore in our lives; this is not really a luxury anymore in our lives. This is almost a necessity. People use them. People of all ages have some sort of device. I'm sure you've recently

noticed that one of the telecommunications companies even has a special plan for seniors. They're really sort of promoting a simpler cellphone with fewer bells and whistles and bigger buttons and whatnot, because they realize there's a market out there where seniors may not want something complicated like a BlackBerry or an iPhone or an Android device. They want something simple so they can connect with their loved ones or have emergency services at their disposal.

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I think having a mechanism in place, as outlined in Bill 82, that requires that contracts be written in plain language; that requires that there be all-inclusive pricing; that requires that there be caps on termination, just in case you've changed your mind or circumstances change in your life—that happens—by which you need to get out of the contract; and the requirement that there be express consent needed in order to amend or extend or renew a contract, is extremely important. These are grievances people face in life which are not necessary. We just need to make sure that rules are in place, that these are the least of the headaches people should worry about. Life is complicated as it is, for whatever circumstances, and people have to worry about a lot of things. The last thing they need to worry about is their cellphone contract or the wireless contract they have for their iPad or other mobile devices that we use all the time.

Speaker, my time is coming to an end, but I just wanted to restate my 100% support for Bill 82. I'm really hopeful that the debate will conclude soon in the Legislature, once the time is up, so we can take it to committee, so we can hear from various stakeholders, because I am sure there will be different views from the industry, from consumer groups, from other broader community members; we can take them into account and make the necessary changes. I'm sure there will be some suggestions into amendments as to how we can make the language clearer in this bill, which is always welcome, which is part of the democratic process. Then, bring it back for third reading in the Legislature and pass it.

I really hope we can pass this before Christmas, and I say this intentionally, because Christmas is a time when you start making these purchases a lot, because these are times where—you know, I'm already hearing from my wife, "Oh, there's a new iPad coming out." Right? So those requests are coming in.

Interjection.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Yes, and our young baby too, who I'm sure will be using a phone sooner than later.

Those requests are already coming in. We need to make sure this bill is in place at the right time, so when people are making those big purchases, when they are engaging in that activity, they are fully protected, and we as a Legislature are doing our jobs to ensure that Ontarians are able to continue to live a hassle-free life.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to make some comments about the speech from the member from Ottawa Centre. First of all, Speaker, our party, while believing in this bill as well, also wants to see a long series of amendments and proper consultation. I think that's going to be important.

The member from Ottawa Centre said he hopes this is done by Christmas. You're going to need to form committees in order to get that done. I know the Liberal Party took six months to form the committees when we were first elected, which resulted in us only getting four bills passed in our first 11 months, which I'm embarrassed to say are the facts. But I do agree; it would be nice. If we got the committees formed early, Speaker, we may actually be able to look at talking about our amendments and having plenty of consultation on this bill.

The member also said there's broad choice out there, and I want to take a couple of seconds to talk about northern Ontario, because there isn't quite the broad choice in northern Ontario. In fact, most of us here from the north chuckled when we saw the cuts being made in the tourism sector in the northwestern part of the province, when they said, "Oh, if you're looking for tourist information, all you have to do is fire up the app on your mobile phone and look at the app, and you'll get all the tourist information that you want on northwestern Ontario." But I have to tell you, Speaker, there's not that kind of coverage in northwestern Ontario. So while we appreciate that, here in the centre of the world, in Toronto, there really is a broad choice, there really is a much more limited choice in the north, which means more reason for us to actually support this bill.

My final point is: You talked about the two-point type and you're wondering, "What are they trying to hide?" I've got to throw that back at the member and say, what are you trying to hide, as well? We're trying to get the documents on Oakville and Mississauga. I ask you the same question you asked: What are you trying to hide?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join today's debate. I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre. He truly has the gift of gab. We all know that in this House. He's eloquent. I can only imagine what his cellphone bills are, and I certainly wouldn't want to see the minutes used.

I do appreciate the intent of this bill. I understand it is a measure to bring about some clarity and transparency when it comes to cellphone contracts. In our country, we are large users of cellphones and the Internet. We're becoming a lot more technologically savvy. I think it's about time that we shine some light on what is essentially a Wild West scenario in the cellphone industry when it comes to contracts. It's a measure of accountability and transparency.

I would point to a measure we brought about as New Democrats, where we proposed to cap gas prices at the pump on Monday mornings. This House voted against that measure of transparency and accountability. I think

the intent is the same: to bring some transparency to the cellphone industry. Why not to another important measure of our economy, gas prices?

We are anxious to see this go to committee, to hear submissions from consumers and consumer groups, because we know that these are the folks who actually have some great ideas as to how we can make this industry a lot more user-friendly.

New Democrats are prepared to propose some ideas. Certainly, one of them would be to make sure that people who are currently in contracts are afforded the transparency that this bill may provide, something that I think is being asked for out there as we canvass and talk to residents in our ridings who currently have exorbitant cellphone bills and are struggling to try to find some rationale within those costs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to speak on Bill 82, the proposed Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012. Four other provinces—Quebec, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia—have introduced similar provisions. David Orazietti's private member's bill was a precursor to this proposed legislation, and as a result of that, we did some consultation previously in this regard, with respect to this proposed legislation.

This proposed legislation, if passed, will provide greater transparency and stronger protections for Ontario consumers and their families when they sign contracts for cellphones and wireless services. It will help us to ensure that Ontario consumers are better protected when it comes to wireless services agreements—protected in terms of their rights, the contract they enter into, the way in which services are provided, knowing how much they will have to pay, and their ability to take advantage of choices in the marketplace.

As these wireless plans are mostly postpaid, meaning consumers enter into agreements before using the services, and they get their monthly bills after they have used the services, it is important for us to have the kind of protection that is needed to protect our consumers.

It is our growing reliance on these devices, with so many people using them and finding they do not understand the services and plans they contracted for, the changes in the contract terms—this is what has given rise to what we have termed "cell shock." Cell shock is what happens when consumers open their wireless services bill and receive exorbitant charges they were not expecting. Cell shock is what happens when consumers are not aware that they're using services that will add additional charges to their bill.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to Ontario consumers and to their families to ensure that when they, like millions of cellphone customers, sign agreements each year, they are clear, comprehensive, easy to understand.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Before I refer to the next member, I'll remind all members of the

House that we don't refer to people by their name but by their riding.

Questions and comments. The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to lend my voice to the ongoing debate around Bill 82, the Wireless Services Agreements Act.

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We here in the House all want consumers to be able to make informed decisions. We all want to protect Ontario consumers and to have them be able to go about their lives with eyes open but free from costly and unexpected fine-print complications. Bill 82 seems to line up with those goals. I think there's a consensus that Bill 82 is a decent bill and that government attention to this issue is perhaps overdue. I also think that there's widespread agreement that this legislation could be improved greatly at committee through hearing the voices and perspectives of various stakeholders in the public and private spheres. When we get down to clause-by-clause consideration, we will hopefully be able to make the kind of level-headed amendments that will protect consumers without creating unnecessary overlap with other jurisdictions or a ream of red tape for the telecommunications industry, because if Bill 82 adds endless regulation and red tape, it could also end up costing consumers in the end, which is obviously not the intent.

Bill 82 has some sensible measures to help cap cancellation fees, prevent automatic renewals and make mobile contracts simpler, written in easy-to-understand language that's as clear as ice water. But at the moment, some members on this side of the House have identified the potential for an unwanted downside to this legislation, specifically with regard to the overlap with similar regulations in other jurisdictions. We should be able to agree on the benefits of a healthy, vibrant and innovative telecommunications sector. We should want to reduce the red tape and regulatory burden, because it affects consumers as well as businesses. In working together, I think we can all contribute to strengthening the legislation so that it is beneficial to all of us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa Centre, you have two minutes.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. We were having such a good, non-partisan morning—but debate is the essence of this Legislature.

I do want to thank the members for Nipissing and Essex, the Minister of Consumer Services and the member from Burlington for bringing in their perspectives on this, because I truly believe, and I think the members will also agree with me, that this is not a partisan issue; this is an issue that impacts all Ontarians equally, no matter which part of the province they come from.

Yes, there are some unique challenges, and I appreciate the member from Nipissing raising the unique challenge around Nipissing. I think he highlighted in his own comments that this legislation is even more important for communities like the northwest, where the choices in terms of providers may be limited, because this will

create better circumstances for northwestern Ontarians to get services at an affordable price in their communities.

Keeping that in mind, I think it's important that we do all work together. It sends a very strong message out in the community—because one thing we know about politics is that people get turned off because of partisan bickering. That's not what people want. That's not what people engage in. They would like to see their legislators, no matter what label, no matter what colour they don, come together and make their lives better. I think if there is a bill out there right now in front of this Legislature that really does that, it's Bill 82, because it speaks to a real issue which is not ideological in nature—unless you just don't agree with consumer protection, but I don't think anybody in this House has those types of views. I think it brings us together and it really can bring the best of all of us out in ensuring that we put Ontarians first, and that we make sure we have a process in place that results in better consumer choices. Therefore, I support this and I ask the members to support it as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real pleasure to have the opportunity this morning to talk about Bill 82. Just a quick summary of the bill: It's 25 different sections and it's 15 pages in total. That means there are seven pages in English. Actually, it's what we would call, I suppose, a sort of "Me, too" act, the "Me, too" bill. The reason I say that, with all due respect—Minister, it's a pleasure to see you here this morning—is, as you said in your remarks—and I think it's important to put in context that the CRTC is looking at this and started their hearings in May. You would know that as well.

There's been a lot of input from across the country. Not only that; as you mentioned, Quebec has it in place already—Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario. Any decisions made by the CRTC will supersede this bill. I believe it's true, and I think it's important—Ontario is such a large province—to contribute to a successful consumer protection bill. I commend that provision. I wonder, sometimes, if the member from Sault Ste. Marie wouldn't be somewhat surprised. I hope you give him—we should call it the David Oraziotti bill, using it in the context that that would be the name of the legislation.

It's important that the minister or the ministry staff are listening, because some time ago I initiated a bill on driver distraction. It was a result of an inquest in my riding where a father and his young daughter were killed crossing a railway crossing. There was an inquest that was able to conclude, I suppose, that the cause was that the father was passing his cellphone to the young daughter to say goodbye to the mother. It was a tragic event. I realized how ubiquitous the whole wireless world is. I mean, it's everywhere. It's taking over on cars now; you have HUD, heads-up display, where it displays it on the windshield. It's really, quite frankly, now integrated, with OnStar, a General Motors product. They have a similar Microsoft product for Chrysler and Ford, where

it's totally integrated into the intelligence of the vehicle itself. In fact, it can tell you if you're going to back into something or even assist in steering in.

The whole issue here of the world of business is important—voice, text and data and the charges that we're charged for. It's clear that most people understand that Canada has some of the highest rates in the world. In the previous remarks made in this House, we were told that in India it's about \$13, and in Canada it's \$70. That would be for a monthly charge. In most countries like Denmark, where Nokia was first developed, they don't have any—it's all wireless; it's all cellphones. There's no more of this running cables from here to there and all that kind of stuff; that's just completely prehistoric. We can talk to the moon, now, from earth, so I think we can manage.

What we need is clear consumer protection. This is where we agree, and our position from our critic was that we would have hearings. Now, the hearings should call on the stakeholders within the industry as well as consumer protection groups. The consumer protection groups that I've looked up myself in preparation—just a little departure here. I just hired a new staff person this week, Michael Pew. Michael, the new staff person, already has three cellphones. He has one for me, one for Jane McKenna and one for his own use. It's quite frankly an example of what I said earlier: they have different functions. He wants the calls to deal with me telling him to do something to be on my phone, and the ones from Ms. McKenna—from Burlington, I should say—on that phone, and his own personal calls, I want them kept off my line. Do you understand? I don't want to be paying for any of his roaming charges or whatever else he might be doing, downloading music or uploading an app. That's exactly how it is.

Even our children today—I have nine grandchildren, and these children have iPads. These iPads teach them things just by point, touch, sounds and developing visual images of the world around them. I would suspect that, in reading this release here—competition in the Canadian wireless sector. This is saying that the hearings about the CRTC—in 1994, they decided that they really weren't that interested in tightly regulating the industry; they wanted more competition. So more providers came in. Then you started to get these complex contracts; thicker than the instruction book was the contract itself, of all the options. Very few people read the fine print, as the previous member from Ottawa, Mr. Naqvi—he was clear on that: These contracts are themselves a challenge for consumers. I would say the CRTC hearings should be paid attention to. The Consumers Council of Canada, it said here, and their president, Don Mercer, recognized Mr. Oraziotti and “is encouraged that the Ontario government has decided to make this initiative part of its agenda” as a government bill. “The private member's bill enjoyed all-party support”—we support it—“so the council is optimistic the government's bill will receive broad support.” It gives all MPPs an opportunity, whether in northern Ontario, urban Ontario or rural Ontario, to comment with

respect to the lack of service in some areas, blackout cells within my area. I'm driving along in my riding of Durham and bang, you're gone. The person listening to you may consider that you may have gone off the road or something.

I think what's important in any consumer protection bill is clarity, plain language and disclosure. Really, what it is is there are two parties to the agreement: One is the consumer and one is the provider, and the disclosure is the first part of the provider.

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Now, the responsibility on the consumer is to read the contract or have it explained to them in plain language. If we can achieve that, there still is a responsibility for the consumer. People who are walking around talking on cellphones all the time—I can't believe it. In fact, it's a pedestrian hazard now if you walk down the street. But they have a responsibility. These gadgets that they're all attached to are not for free. Somebody has to put the software in place and the cell towers and sort out all the communication gadgetry and digitalization, but I think that's important to keep in mind: that the consumer has to be responsible at the end of the day. One of the people said that we should—the consumer's report said that we should not mollycoddle the consumer. This is a case where you can only do so much, Minister, in all fairness, to legislate against—should I be so coarse as to say?—stupidity.

I think we need to change the channel, as I said before. I know for myself, the biggest surprise I've had in the 17 or 18 years that I've been here—and Mr. Arnett's been here over 20. It's surprising; he's only about 30 years old. But I would say this: The biggest surprise for me was the roaming charges. When I was out of the province, I was mistaken—this was some years ago—that I was only receiving calls from my office and/or reading press releases and stuff like that, so I was getting voice communication as well as data communication. I came home only to find that I'd had a humongous roaming charge bill on top of my normal cell charges. That's another thing that people need to be aware of: the use of it, and downloading.

Maybe some of the people who are more technically literate in this stuff—they're always talking about bandwidth, too. If you're downloading movies and all this kind of stuff—and that's the future. If you've got an iPad—which is a phone, it's a camera, it's a GPS device; it's a multi-functional gadget—you could be watching movies. You could be watching live-streaming hockey. I've watched, on mine, live-streaming broadcasts, news-casts. It's incredible. If you leap ahead five years, these young pages who are here—there will be, really, virtually no reason to write. You'll be able to speak and it will record it. It will record it in digital format, and so you'll be able to send it to somebody as an email. You won't have to type it. That's months away. This is becoming a rather important tool in life, and in that respect, we need to have clear, simple rules on the bill.

Now, there are a couple of sections in the bill which I had the chance to look at. I think section 17 is “Cancel-

lation by consumer at any time.” This is important, so I took a look at this section. Let me have a look here. I underlined it because there are so many good sections here. I don’t know if this is actually as clear as the bill could be, so I’d ask the minister to look at that section. I’m going to jump right in.

The first section says, “A consumer may, at any time, and without any reason, cancel a wireless agreement by giving notice to the supplier.” It goes on to say that it “takes effect on the later of the date the consumer gives notice of cancellation to the supplier or the date that the consumer specifies in the notice, which date cannot be later than the expiry date....” It’s pretty straightforward. I haven’t got a clue what they’re talking about technically. I know that there’s a requirement to inform the supplier, and then the supplier would inform you. So it’s two-way knowledge that they’ve received it, and you should keep that record, somehow, on the cellphone itself or in some data file somewhere.

“Subject to this section, the cancellation terminates the rights and obligation of the parties under the wireless agreement on a go-forward basis from the date on which the cancellation takes effect....

“If the consumer cancels a wireless agreement with no fixed term”—this is important—“and in respect of which the supplier provided no goods to the consumer free of charge or at a discount, the supplier shall not charge the consumer a cancellation fee”—and it goes on to say—“and shall not demand, request or accept payment for the cancellation.”

But it goes on further. There can be charges for cancellation. It would be part of the original agreement and in the disclosure.

There’s another part here, the calculated formula; it’s very complicated, how they calculate this cancellation fee. That’s on page 11, if people want to look it up.

There’s another section here on the fines. I found that fairly onerous too, I would say. Why do they have these big numbers in here? People don’t pay them, I think. They go to court instead of paying.

Here’s what it says. This is under “General,” and these are on the “Offences.” “An individual who is convicted of an offence under this act is liable to a fine of not more than \$50,000”—holy smokes; I hope some of these young people walking around with a cellphone are aware the fine could be \$50,000—that’s for an individual—or imprisonment for up to two years less a day. A corporation, if convicted—it’s \$250,000 for a violation.

So there’s some pretty, pretty onerous material in this particular bill. I think it’s well intended. Our position is clear: We would be asking for an extensive consultation with the shareholders.

I would only say here that in the preamble, which explains, “The act contains other measures for protecting consumers under a wireless agreement. For example, a supplier must have a system”—the supplier—“in place for providing advance notice to the consumer when the consumer accesses a service under the agreement that will result in a cost in addition to the minimum periodic

cost.” In other words, if you haven’t got it in your contract to just download data or movies, they’re supposed to develop a system to notify you. You can’t just go ahead and do it under a contract that didn’t include that advantage. If you have a contract that’s on a month-to-month basis, which many of them are today—I think it’s five out of every 10 people have a cellphone. Now, the vast majority of them are on a month-to-month—casual. But if somebody takes the phone and starts playing around with it, downloading stuff and stuff like that, they could end up with real charges.

“A consumer is allowed to cancel a wireless agreement” and to amend the agreement, and do all this without reason. So there’s quite a bit of improvement there for the consumers themselves and some additional responsibilities for the provider. I could say that, in my own case, I have looked into this, and I’m considering a couple of other points that I’m looking for.

One of the things, without criticizing any of the suppliers—we, probably all in the Legislature here, are with one supplier, and that supplier’s bills, I would like them to be a little more straightforward. We get a monthly bill. You can hardly untangle whether they’ve taken your last payment off the bill. I think that billing itself is a problem for me. I don’t know, Mr. Speaker, you might have been shaking your head there too. But I have completely great staff in my office in Bowmanville who kindly look after that, but I sign everything because, ultimately, we’re responsible.

These are the actions taken, I would say. A submission by Rogers to Leonard Katz, who was the acting chair of the CRTC—and this is in March; it’s part 1 of the application by Rogers partnership to implement a national wireless services consumer protection code. So, the industry themselves is taking heed to this, and they’ve made this delegation or presentation to the CRTC, and I commend them for that. It talks about section 24 of the Telecommunications Act, the federal bill. “Rogers Communications Partnership ... hereby request that the commission establish a CRTC interconnection steering committee to develop and implement a national wireless services consumer code....” That’s the goal that we should all be aiming at. I put that to the minister because that’s the industry’s—probably the one that we’re most familiar with—position on it for sure.

If you look at it, as I said, there are five wireless users out of every 10 people—there are a lot of people there—and we must avoid overlap in jurisdictions. The minister would know this as well, that “legal proceedings are before the Ontario Superior Court of Justice under the misleading advertising provisions of the Competition Act. The bureau is seeking:

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“—full refunds for customers”—and this is before the courts already, and I think that these things are good signals that the minister is on the right track and, I believe, the member from Sault Ste. Marie and other provinces;

“—administrative monetary penalties—\$10 million each from Bell, Rogers and Telus, and \$1 million from

the" Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, "CWTA;

"—a stop to any representations that do not clearly disclose the price and other terms and conditions applicable to premium-rate digital content; and

"—a corrective notice from each of Bell, Rogers, Telus, and the CWTA, to inform the general public about the terms and conditions of any order issued against them."

So it's before the courts. Other jurisdictions have done it. They say that Quebec is watching very closely what Ontario is doing, and I think the contribution that members here make about having clear transparency will help all Canadians, and that's the end goal.

Our critic on this file, Mr. McDonnell, said a few things that I want to put on the record, because he has done considerable work on this. The bill is "jumping the gun," and it's a "me, too" bill, meaning everybody else is doing it. But Ontario is a large province and needs to be playing at the table here.

The CRTC is preparing to create a national regulation. The major providers are on board with the CRTC. The bill was announced eight days after the CRTC announced consultation was tabled, the same day as the consultations closed. We must avoid a patchwork of regulations across the country. The bill tries to outdo Quebec by forcing an early warning system that users, when they are about to hit their limit with their operator—it will be at a greater cost, and they have to be notified. They're estimating \$100 million per operator—\$100 million, holy smokes.

There are free and cheap apps that are already on the market. Consumers deserve protection as high cancellation fees are not reasonable, and we all agree with that. Bill 5, as I said, has been sort of eclipsed, I guess. The government doesn't share the whole truth regarding complaints. They cite the telecommunications complaints commissioner, who logged 8,000 complaints against cellphone providers. The Ministry of Consumer Services itself received some complaints about cellphone providers, and it goes on to say that gyms receive many more complaints.

So there's no catastrophic failure in the marketplace; in fact, we should make the marketplace more consumer-friendly. On our side, I'm sure many members will wish to speak about this bill here. I only wish I had more time. I don't know what I would say actually, but there is much more to be said, and even listening to other members I think could be a contribution as well. Even the complaints commissioner sides with the supplier often, saying that we shouldn't mollycoddle the consumers too much. So there you are.

Again, the CRTC is the ultimate boss at the end of the day, and I suppose they're listening, hopefully, to this speech this morning, because it was so informative. But 25% of cellphone users are on a month-to-month agreement, and these are the ones who don't realize that some of the stuff that they're applying to or applications they're using could in fact be a super-charge on their bill,

which may cause them to issue a complaint, which means they should have read the contract in the first place.

Thank you for the time this morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, this bill will be of consequence to a lot of people in Ontario, because I think a lot of people in Ontario are quite shocked by their wireless charges. I think my colleague from Algoma-Manitowlin will be talking about the kinds of problems that people face when they call in to see if they can get reductions in their charges, and in the end find that they've been sold a whole bunch of new services.

Increasingly, there's no doubt that people come to rely on their wireless services, on their cellphones, and the member from Durham was quite correct: Increasingly people move away from land lines to become wireless operators in all aspects of their lives.

I look forward to hearing Mr. Mantha talk about this bill, because—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Once again, I'll remind all my colleagues that we should refer to members by their riding.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The member for Algoma-Manitowlin—and quite proud he is to be that representative. Thank you for the reminder, Mr. Speaker. I'm very appreciative.

The bill, however, is very limited in the matters that it addresses. I'm sure that there will be opportunities, as we go further down this road, to look at improvements.

There's no question this bill wouldn't be here today if there wasn't a lot of upset and anger amongst cellphone wireless customers who find that they get bills that letter carriers roll into their homes on wheels. They're big. They're expensive. We pay some of the highest wireless and cellphone charges in the world here in Ontario. That matter of people paying a fortune for service which is much cheaper in many other jurisdictions is going to become increasingly pressing.

I appreciate the opportunity today to address the matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, first of all let me thank the member from Ottawa Centre, who spoke earlier. I also want to thank all the members who are speaking positively, and I look forward to all members of the Legislature supporting this bill.

I would like to respond to the member from Durham regarding the CRTC. I am well aware that the CRTC is holding hearings to determine whether they should take action in the future. Basically, having hearings to possibly hold future hearings is the action that's been taken so far by the CRTC. I am encouraged to hear that they are taking action with respect to this and am looking forward to it. But in the interim, life goes on here in the province of Ontario. We have a responsibility to Ontario consumers, and that is why we want to act with respect to this bill, because I don't know how long these hearings are going to go on.

The member from Durham also spoke about an incident in Durham that I'm quite familiar with: a father and daughter who were killed near the railway tracks. That was a very tragic incident of someone talking on the phone, with a young child in the car, and both died. I think this is a great opportunity for us to remind Ontarians not to text while driving and not to use hand-held mobile devices while driving, as well.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak to the member from Toronto–Danforth, who spoke about people being upset and angry relating to the shock that they get—the cell shock we refer to—when they get the bills, where they are not expecting the kind of monies that are on the bill. The response is that this proposed legislation is here to provide some security for the members of the public when they get their cellphone bills, to know that they're not going to be surprised when they get their bills. They want to be able to have some assurance that they are—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I was very pleased to have the opportunity to listen to the member for Durham this morning as he talked about Bill 82. As he always does, he brought forward the views of his constituents very effectively, and also his own wisdom and experience in terms of his service as a member of the Legislature for many years. He offered some very interesting comments. In terms of this bill and in terms of regulation respecting the use of cellphones and the billing procedures, he mentioned that there needs to be clarity, there needs to be plain language and there needs to be full disclosure in terms of the agreements that people are signing. He mentioned there needs to be clearer consumer protection. I would certainly agree with all of those statements.

As he said, cellphones and other hand-held devices are ubiquitous in our society today. I think back to when I was first elected to the Legislature, Mr. Speaker—and you'll recall this, too, 20, 25 years ago—cellphones were almost the size of bricks. Very few people actually had them. But I remember through the years, more and more—in fact, now most high school students have them in their knapsacks, including my own two sons.

The fact is, we have to ensure that consumer protection legislation is in place and that it's fair for both the providers as well as the consumers.

The member for Durham is too modest. He talked about his role in terms of the highway safety legislation which banned the use of cellphones or other hand-held devices while people are operating a motor vehicle. In fact, he pushed for that for many years and, in the finest traditions of this Legislature, brought forward private members' bills which in fact led, ultimately, to a government bill that has improved highway safety dramatically.

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I would take this opportunity to remind people, as I remind my own son who's 17 and just got his G2 licence, that we have to be very careful on the highway. Obviously, studies have shown that the use of cellphones or other hand-held devices, if you're using them when you're

driving, in fact, is more dangerous perhaps than even driving while impaired.

Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, and I look forward to the continued debate on Bill 82.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir de rajouter quelques détails au sujet du discours qui a été porté par le député de Durham au niveau du projet de loi 82. Le projet de loi s'appelle la Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.

Les commentaires qui ont été faits sont des commentaires avec lesquels je suis en accord. Je dirais que tout le monde ici, tous les députés à l'Assemblée, ont un téléphone cellulaire. L'Assemblée nous permet d'en avoir un, mais je dirais que dans notre vie personnelle, ainsi que dans celle des membres de notre famille, nos voisins, etc., maintenant quasiment tout le monde a un cellulaire.

Et les surprises continuent, bien que les consommateurs soient souvent à leur deuxième ou troisième appareil cellulaire. Ils ont eu des contrats avant. Ils sont à l'affût des possibilités que les compagnies leur chargent trop. Ils négocient leur contrat, ils surveillent les ventes, etc., et lorsque la première facture arrive, c'est toujours la même chose : des surprises, des frais cachés, des frais excédentaires. On pensait qu'on les avait discutés, on pensait qu'on les avait réglés, et : « Non, ah non, c'est parce que vous avez uploadé un tel service » ou « Vous êtes allé sur un site Internet quelconque. Ça fait qu'on vient de rajouter un autre 3,50 \$ sur votre facture. » Le mois suivant, c'est un autre six dollars sur votre facture, puis à la fin de l'année c'est des centaines de dollars excédentaires qui ont été ajoutés aux factures des consommateurs.

Je suis en accord avec les points que le député de Durham a soulevés.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham, you have two minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, a pleasure. I thank the member from Toronto–Danforth, and of course, it's a pleasure that the Minister of Consumer Services was here. The member from Wellington–Halton Hills, I thank you for your complimentary remarks. Merci, Madame Gélinas, for your comments in français. I had to listen to the translation, but I believe we all talked about the same thing, about cell shock, which is the bill that you get, whether it's a new contract or a contract after you may have been out of the country.

I do appreciate that the growth in our own office budgets in this one issue is the technology piece. Everybody has one or two cellphones. You have three or four staff. It's probably \$300 or \$400 a month. It's quite unusual. I remember when I worked for a large company that we used to have a pager, and I think it was \$50 a month or something so they could always get in touch with you. The cellphone and the wireless stuff that our young people will have is the office of the future. You can find

out anything, you can talk anywhere, you can get anywhere from anywhere, so we need to have clear rules—and privacy issues as well—with respect to voice, text and data and how we're going to receive and transmit this information and the service provider's responsibility in all of that.

I look forward to broader consultations on this. I'm sure it will be interesting and informative and will therefore protect consumers by the very discussion we're having. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I look forward to the day where, in Algoma-Manitoulin, we won't have to rely on dial-up, where we'll actually have cell service. That would be a big step forward.

It's a privilege to get up, Mr. Speaker, and again, I like to give kudos where kudos are deserved: the Minister of Consumer Services and the member for his private member's bill—good show. This is a long time coming. We should be moving it forward, and of course we're going to be looking forward to having this bill at committee, to getting all the stakeholders and the individuals who will have their say on actually making this bill that much better.

Now, besides being the MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin, with constituents who still rely on dial-up, I have another part-time job, just so you know: I'm a troubleshooter for cell service. With me, I have a team of four individuals—one of them here in Queen's Park and three in my constituency office—who consistently deal with troubles with cell service: billing, penalties, cancellation fees. The list goes on and on.

This is something that we consistently do. I did it, as a matter of fact, in a supporting role in my previous job, and I have to say that I was fortunate in getting remedies for some people. However, with others who didn't come in or walk through the doors of our office, we never were able to fix them. So a lot of these measures may help that.

Every time I call my service provider, I am usually on hold for great lengths, trying to get an explanation for what I'm actually being charged for. Oftentimes, I'm convinced the hidden fees and services are unknown to their representatives. They really just don't know what I'm talking about. So we understand this bill enacts a new act to govern these wireless agreements; therefore, an agreement between a supplier and a consumer in which the supplier agrees to provide wireless services, whether or not the supplier agrees to provide goods to the consumer under the agreement. What I like is that under this bill the supplier must provide information on the cost to a consumer, which must be included in any price advertising. This is a fantastic idea.

Now, through our discussions that we'll be having at the committee, can we look at applying it through the sales/marketing department of these companies? I'll tell you about a little bit of an issue that I've had experience with. Individuals are receiving these wonderful adver-

tisements: "If you call in, we have these great packages for you, and it will reduce the actual cost of your phone bill." We'll refer to that as the bait, all right? So the bait is set. You receive in your mail a nice announcement that says, "This is your package that you're paying for now, but if you call, we're going to offer you this"—a different package.

So the bait is set. A lot of individuals call in. And then, all of a sudden, as you're calling in, that's where the switch happens. If nobody's familiar with the term "bait and switch," you should be, because this happens often. Now, they switch this announcement on you, or this publication or this advertisement, and all of a sudden, by the end of the call, you have more charges on your phone, you have a new phone and you have a bigger bill than you started with. This is a bait and switch.

As I said, in my previous employment I was successful in getting individuals who would come into the office out of that contract. However, a lot of seniors are targeted through this bait and switch. Particular areas, particular communities are targeted with this type of a service, and there are a lot of people still out there that are too embarrassed that they've been caught in this little bit of a scam, a little bit of a catch. Those individuals are still out there paying those high prices for their cellphone service and other services, because this bait and switch is not only with cell service. It's also with satellite. It's also with TV. It's all over the place. So it's about time that we start recognizing this particular problem.

If a wireless agreement does not meet the disclosure requirements or if a supplier does not disclose a copy of the agreement, the consumer can cancel the contract without penalties. The act includes authority to make regulations on matters such as specifying additional rights and obligations of consumers and suppliers.

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What is most important for us is the need for greater protection for the consumer of wireless phones, smart phones and mobile data services, and we support this initiative.

Now seriously, I want to talk to you about an issue in my riding. I just got a message on my "WhiteBerry" here, this wonderful piece of technology that we all use. I apologize for using a prop, Mr. Speaker. My staff said it would be nice to have a service range that matches the bill; then it might not hurt so much to pay the darn bill. It would be nice to have that. Thank you to my constituency assistant Cindy.

Seriously, I wanted to tell you a little bit of a story from back home. When I first got set up here, my staff and I were a team of five, and we were trying to set up our phone service. We were arguing with the provider. I knew what I needed. He wanted to sell me his wonderful technology, this 3G, 4G. It doesn't work in my riding; there is no support for that type of service. I needed the old CDMA. So it took four of us from my office to deal with this. It took at least three individuals from LIS to convince the provider to do it. Plus, I think it was about a three-week period when we finally got the phones. I finally got frustrated and said, "Listen. I'll go out and

find the phones. You just put the service into it." We were successful in doing that, but it took an army just to set us up with cellphone services and the proper cellphone service which I will be able to serve my constituents with.

So that is just in my area. Again, some of my constituents are still stuck with dial-up.

I'm all for putting an end to unfair practices. These wireless companies have become so accustomed to concealing their real costs, and every month you get a reminder in the mail. Oh, yes, that reminder which comes in the format of a bill, which every single one of us here is so happy to see, that wonderful bill—well, it costs somebody to draft that bill, and that's an additional cost that we're all getting as well. As I was saying, unfortunately, each month, you get that reminder that you are paying far more than what you had thought you had agreed to. We would agree that ending this culture of secrecy that results in unknown hidden fees and charges is a good thing for consumers.

New Democrats would also support another provision in the legislation which would limit contract termination penalties. Perhaps once wireless service providers start offering fair and transparent plans, once they start providing the services they claim to provide, the consumers will not be dissatisfied and will have fewer reasons for cancelling their plans in the first place.

Holding these large wireless service companies to account, especially in their advertisements, is a must. It is imperative that suppliers advertise the all-inclusive price for their service before the HST is put on to their bills. Moreover, this all-inclusive price has to be the most prominent cost information in the advertising.

The supplier has to ensure that the agreement is in writing and that it discloses the name of the consumer, the name and contact info of the supplier, the date of the agreement, the term of the agreement, the expiry date of the agreement, a description that itemizes each service, a statement indicating whether any of the goods provided with the agreement are subject to any technological or physical features that restrict their functioning, the terms and method of payment, the total amount paid by the consumer before entering into the agreement, the minimum amount payable by the consumer for each billing period, the manner of calculating the amount that the consumer is required to pay to the supplier if the consumer cancels the agreement and the total cost of the contract for the billing cycle, which is really what many people have issues with.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm delighted today to introduce the parents and brother of page Caelius, who, today, is

one of the page captains. I'd like to introduce Sam Musharbash, the father; the mother, Franca Tarentino; and the brother, Phoenix, all of whom are here in the audience.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and welcome.

The member from Whitby—Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. I have several introductions to make this morning, so I ask for your indulgence.

First, I'd like to welcome members of the Canadian Sikh Association to Queen's Park: Jagtar Singh, Deepinder Singh Loomba and Avtar Singh Dhillon. They will be hosting a reception from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. in committee room 2. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Secondly, I'd like to welcome some guests from my riding of Whitby—Oshawa. We have Mr. Tyson Harrison, Ms. Christina Zevenhoven, Ms. Amber Harrison, Ms. Matteha Liston, and Ms. Michelle Marshall, who is the executive director of the Participation House Project of Durham region. They're all here to listen to the private members' business that's happening this afternoon. And also Ms. Vanessa Foran, a co-op student who's currently working in my office. Welcome to all of you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all our guests.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask the entire Legislative Assembly to join me in welcoming a number of guests in the members' lounge. I have Jagtar Singh, who was one of the first residents to take up the issue of wearing a dastar, wearing a turban in the bus system in Hamilton; Deepinder Singh Loomba, who was the first to fight for the right to wear a turban in Home Depot; and Avtar Singh Dhillon, who was the individual responsible for fighting for the right to wear a dastar in BC.

I also have Baljit Singh Ghuman, president of the Canadian Sikh Association, as well as Balkaranjeet Singh Gill, president of the Guru Nanak Mission in Brampton.

I ask everyone to welcome them today.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I would like to welcome the entire Canadian Sikh Association to the Legislature today, and I encourage all of my colleagues to join us as they will host an open house in committee room 2 at noon today. I encourage everyone to attend. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Energy, and it concerns the power plant documents.

Speaker, the minister has been hung out to dry by the Premier and his cabinet. He's been abandoned by his caucus, forced to sit in this House every day and watch his fellow leadership competitors smirk as he pays the price for their sins. The minister wants to be leader of the Liberal Party, but surely he knows that that's all over if this House finds him in contempt.

So I ask the minister, given that the Premier has turned his back on him, will he finally do what's right and table the documents immediately?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the question. We listened to the communities in both Mississauga and Oakville. We cancelled the plants. We're not proceeding with those.

There has been a lot of discussion about the documents, and I recall a couple of weeks ago there were submissions before you with respect to those documents. You gave a ruling. I indicated, as soon as you gave the ruling, that I would be complying with the ruling, and I have repeated that since then. I know there have been some discussions with the House leaders, but I was very clear on that. I thank the Speaker for the ruling and I thank my colleague opposite for the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: To the minister once again: Speaker, the minister was once the Attorney General of this province. He's a lawyer by profession. He knows full well what the ramifications of being held in contempt are. He knows that he could lose his licence to practise law. He knows that he could be expelled from the Law Society of Upper Canada. He knows that he may be called before this House to deliver a humiliating apology—and for what, to protect the Liberal Party of Ontario, to take a bullet for Premier McGuinty?

I ask the minister, what is it going to take for him to release the documents? A raid by the OPP, a public shaming, being disbarred? Do it now, Minister: Release the documents and save yourself.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm enormously respectful of the Speaker and his authority in this place. You made a ruling in this place. I was here when you made the ruling. I indicated, in answer to questions in question period just after that, that I would be complying with the ruling, and that's exactly what I'll be doing. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the minister: Clearly, the minister has little understanding of the humiliating precedent he's about to set. In case he's unaware, I'd like to inform the minister that the Legislative Assembly Act empowers this House with many of the same powers of punishment as a court of law. I can assure the minister, as the opposition House leader, that we will be pursuing each and every one of those powers.

My question for the minister is this: Why? Why are you risking it all—your political career, your legal career, your integrity—for a party and a government that don't even care about you?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Well, again, I thank the member for the question. As I recall the ruling, it had a number of terms in it and it had a date. The date was clear to all, and we're not at the date. I quite understand

and understood the terms of the ruling. I understand that there were discussions among the House leaders, as was suggested and encouraged in the ruling, and I also understand that there's a date. I'll be complying with the ruling.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the energy minister. Mr. Speaker, we know this is a difficult time for this minister. He's been deserted in the trenches, left fighting the Premier's battles all by himself. The Liberal Party has cut him loose. They know a fall guy when they see one. The minister's entire professional career is on the line. For the sake of protecting the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development, he's risking it all: his legal career, his leadership bid and his credibility.

Throughout this process, the Premier and the Liberal Party have repeatedly put themselves ahead of Ontario. They've been concerned with nothing but their own selfish political fortunes.

I ask the minister, will you end this charade? Will you stand up for yourself? Will you stand up for Ontario and table those documents immediately today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, as I indicated in my previous answers, I was here when you made the ruling, and you heard lots of submissions and all the different issues and interests. They were presented to you and so I won't go back into those. You made a ruling at the end of that, and in answer to questions which followed, I indicated that I was respectful of the ruling, thanked you for the ruling and that I would be complying with the ruling.

Part of that was—these are not your words; I'm paraphrasing—an encouragement to the House leaders to see if they could get together and have some discussions. I understand that they have had and are having some discussions. I'll turn the supplementaries over to my colleague to deal with, but I simply indicate as I indicated before: I'll be complying with the ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Again to the minister: Minister, it's painful watching you struggle to defend that which you know is simply indefensible. I actually feel sorry for you.

Speaker, it's unbecoming of a minister of the crown to rise in this House and defend the inexcusable actions of the Premier and the Liberal Party. Instead of focusing on his own leadership bid, the minister is busy defending the leadership of a Premier who has failed this province enormously. The minister surely feels he can do a better job. Why, then, is the minister sacrificing himself to protect a legacy of scandal, of waste and of self-opportunism?

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Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, what's painful is watching the opposition ignore your ruling. Let me quote, Mr. Speaker, from your ruling of that day. What

you did was you cited a passage from Speaker Milliken which you believed applied in this situation. I'd like to quote it for members: "It seems to me, that the issue before us is this: Is it possible to put into place a mechanism by which these documents could be made available to the House without compromising the security and confidentiality of the information they contain? In other words, is it possible for the two sides, working together in the best interest of the Canadians they serve, to devise a means where both their concerns are met?"

That is exactly what's happening, Mr. Speaker. The House leaders met last week for close to two hours. We will be meeting again today, and I have faith that the three of us, coming together, can find that spirit of co-operation that you called for in your ruling of 10 days ago.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Rob Leone: Right back to the Minister of Energy, Mr. Speaker. None of us on this side of the House blame the minister for being disappointed or angry. We understand how hurt he must be by the betrayal of his closest colleagues. It must be difficult to watch your entire political career unravel before your eyes. While the minister is here falling on the sword of the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development, his cabinet colleagues, like the Minister of Municipal Affairs, are busy assembling their leadership campaigns. We watch as the energy minister stands there struggling with the weight of two cancelled power plants on his shoulders. I ask him, why won't you shrug? Why won't you stop being complicit in the destruction of your own integrity?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, we have respect for your ruling on this side of the House, and I'd remind the honourable member—let me quote again from your ruling, Mr. Speaker. This is you speaking directly. "I, too, have immense faith in the abilities of the honourable members of this House. I know that a solution can be found to this impasse. All sides need to exercise sobriety in this. Political fortunes should not be the motive for eroding the supremacy of Parliament or ignoring the best interests of citizens in this province. Assiduous attention should be paid to dealing with matters such as this responsibly."

Mr. Speaker, that is the approach that this side of the House is taking. I'm quite frankly disappointed that members of the opposition are not gathering behind their House leader to look for a responsible and co-operative way to balance the interests that are at play in the release of these documents.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Does the Premier believe that public disclosure is a threat to effective government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No, Speaker, we do not. It may come as a surprise, but on this particular issue we in government and the opposition are in violent agreement.

Speaker, we all stand four-square against the development of that particular gas plant in that community. It was a difficult decision to make, but I was heartened by the fact that we had the strong support of both opposition parties in this regard, and we both believed that, at the appropriate time, and certainly in keeping with your ruling, we should make all these documents public, Speaker. I think on this, as I say, we are in violent agreement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, nearly a decade ago the Premier said, "The Conservative government has treated public disclosure as a threat to effective government. We see it as exactly the opposite: a basic right and an essential means of ensuring that decisions are made in the public interest." He then promised, "We will require that all future contracts signed by the government be subject to public scrutiny." After nearly 10 years in office, does the Premier still believe that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as I say, we respect the ruling that you've put forward. The question at hand is not about the release of the documents. All sides agree that the documents need to be released. But what we are pointing out, Mr. Speaker, is that on the advice of the Auditor General, based on the situation—the negotiations that are going on right now—we need to find a way to release those documents that does not jeopardize the position of the taxpayers of Ontario.

You have asked the House leaders to come together and find a reasonable way to balance these interests and achieve this goal. That is what's happening. As I said, Mr. Speaker, we met for close to two hours last night, and I look forward to further discussion this afternoon, in keeping with the ruling that you put forward about a week ago.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, that government was elected on a promise of ending self-serving politics and opening government to the people. That's what they were elected on. Now after almost a decade in office, we see a government that's more interested in their own political survival than the public good and that's scrambling to hide public information from the people who pay the bills.

When did the Premier stop believing that public disclosure was essential to making sure that decisions are made in the public interest?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again I remind the honourable member of what Jim McCarter, the Auditor General of Ontario and an officer of this Legislature, said on September 5 in public accounts: "My sense on the Oakville one—that is the Oakville gas plant—"is that it could very well be that some of this information could be subject to client-solicitor privilege, or even if we were to get it, in my opinion, it could be damaging to the province's negotiating position." Mr. Speaker, I have a

tremendous amount of respect for Ontario's Auditor General, Mr. McCarter. He is an officer of this Legislature.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, the question is not whether we will release these documents, but can we find a fashion to release them which protects the interests of the taxpayers of Ontario? We are standing up for those interests on this side of the House, and I think it's time that the opposition stood up for them as well.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. This government has a problem, Speaker. It's that the people who sent us here, the people who make this province work every day, see growing evidence that this government will say and do anything to hold on to power. They see little or nothing being done to take on the challenges that they are facing.

Will the Premier get his priorities right finally and stop focusing on the challenges that are facing the Liberal Party and start focusing on the challenges that are facing the people of this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, that's exactly what we're doing. The fact of the matter is, I'm a little bit bewildered, frankly, while my honourable colleague is raising an issue which is the subject of a very important and productive discussion among House leaders. Either she has confidence in her House leader to pursue those discussions, or she does not.

But I have confidence in her House leader. I have tremendous confidence in her House leader. He's a good man from northern Ontario. He represents my mother's old hometown, and he's always welcome both in the north and over here, I must say, as well.

I do say, Speaker, I have confidence in the ability of the three House leaders to come together, work through this issue and do so in a way that is in full compliance with your ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, only this Premier will be bewildered by why New Democrats work hard to get public disclosure for the people. The people who make this province work every day are very happy to do their part and to pay their fair share. But here's what they're seeing: They're seeing a government that promised transparency being called out for secrecy and contempt by the Environmental Commissioner; a government that promised to make life affordable signing secret deals that add millions and millions of dollars to their electricity bills; a government that warned that reckless Conservative legislation would cost millions when challenged in the courts now proposing the exact same kind of plan.

Why would the people believe what this government has to say when they themselves don't believe it, Speaker?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Just to paraphrase what the Premier said, the honourable member can't seem to take yes for an answer.

When it came to the Oakville power plant, let me share some quotes with her. The member for Toronto—Danforth told InsideHalton, "I don't agree with the Oakville power plant, I don't think it's necessary." The member from Beaches—East York on December 2 in this very Legislature said, "I'm glad that the people of Oakville came to their senses. I'm glad the people of Oakville hired Erin Brockovich and did all the things that they did in order to have this killed."

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The leader of the third party herself, October 18, 2010: "New Democrats actually have thought for a long time that the plant should never have been built and we've said so."

Mr. Speaker, the plant has been cancelled. The documents will be released. All we are trying to figure out is a responsible way to do that to protect the best interests of the taxpayers of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I'm glad they understand over there the wrong-headedness of their move on that plant from day one. We knew it all along. We've said it all along.

After promising change a decade ago, Speaker, it's clear that this government will say or do anything to hold on to power. The party that promised transparency is scrambling to hide public contracts. The party that warned against simplistic and unconstitutional Conservative plans is now adopting the very same kind of plans. The party that promised to protect the public interest is ignoring the challenges that face everyday people in this province. Why should anyone believe anything that this government has to say?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member stands in her place and talks about the public interest. That is exactly what we are trying to defend on this side of the House. The simple fact is that there are sensitive negotiations that are going on concerning the Oakville plant. We have said that we will release the documents. We are trying to find a way to move forward which respects these sensitive negotiations and, through them, respects the rights of the taxpayers of Ontario.

This is about finding a solution to a complex problem. We respect the ruling that you put forward, and I call on the honourable members opposite to respect your ruling as well as we work towards a negotiated solution.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, the clock is ticking, ticking down on your credibility and your bid to become Liberal leader. Come Tuesday, you'll officially become the victim of the Liberal team's seat-saver decision to cancel the Oakville and the Mississauga gas plants. Without even thinking

twice, the Premier threw you under the bus in an effort to buy an election that cost Ontarians hundreds of millions of dollars.

Minister, given that the Premier and all his advisers have turned against you, will you finally denounce the Liberal campaign team's seat-saver program and release the power plant documents requested by this House today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Just a couple of things are clear with respect to the gas plants, and that is that all three parties have supported not proceeding with the plants—all three. Secondly, all three parties have advanced the public interest.

Third, I've been very clear with respect to the Speaker's ruling. We'll comply with the Speaker's ruling, and part of the Speaker's ruling was that there were discussions among House leaders, which I understand are still under way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: Again to the Minister: Minister, the Liberal government record is one of mismanagement, incompetence and cover-up, whether it's refusing to testify—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While I will not ask to withdraw, I ask the member to be cautious of that. It was a generalization, but it does start to move down the ladder I don't like. Carry on, please.

Mr. Michael Harris: Whether it's refusing to testify on Ornge or withholding critical documents on eHealth and the Mississauga and Oakville power plants, the Liberal government has shown over and over again that it will stop at nothing to keep Ontarians in the dark. In the most stunning display of Liberal arrogance, the energy minister has made it very clear that he's even willing to risk being found in contempt of this House to stop the release of documents relating to the Liberals' seat-saver program.

Minister, enough is enough. It's time to stop hiding. So I ask you: Will you release the power plant documents today and admit Ontarians should no longer have confidence in your scandal-plagued Liberal government?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: There are many, many quotes for both sides of the opposition. Here is what the member from Halton had to say in Hansard: "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them."

The member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, in a letter to Minister Duguid: "The potential for future alternate generation in Nanticoke to replace that slated for the proposed and disputed Clarkson plant should receive ample consideration."

The Leader of the Opposition told the Globe and Mail on September 25, 2011: "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga."

MPP Ted Chudleigh, the member from Halton, on October 19: "I was pleased when it was cancelled."

Mr. Speaker, the simple fact of the matter is that all sides of the House have rejected this plant. All sides of the House are looking for a way to make the relevant documents available based on your ruling and based on the request from the estimates committee.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker, a year after we learned the LCBO was overcharging consumers, we learned that not much has happened through this minister or his ministry. According to Global News, the LCBO asked a French brandy supplier to raise the price quote by \$1.79 a bottle. They asked to pay more than what was asked, despite the fact that the LCBO was ordering 180 cases of Calvados.

You'd think that a monopoly buyer the size of the LCBO would use its size to lower the price, not to raise it. When will this government tell the LCBO to use its leverage to get a better deal for Ontarians and not for foreign liquor suppliers?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we welcome the Auditor General's review. That was one among a number of recommendations, many of which we have acted on.

The member opposite will know that groups like MADD and others support a minimum pricing rule for very valid reasons, which is at the essence of how we establish liquor prices in this province. It's complicated in that sense because those prices don't get passed on to consumers. In fact, the way it is designed to work is to ensure that those who feel strongly in this province that there ought to be minimum pricing in order to prevent abuse of alcohol and so on—that's been the model of pricing throughout the history of the LCBO.

We concur with the auditor's advice to look at this carefully, because frankly, the additional revenue that could accrue to the province—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: We're not talking here about minimum price for very cheap alcohol; this was \$50.75 a bottle.

The Auditor General found that the LCBO does not negotiate discounts for high-volume purchases to reduce its costs. He found that the LCBO has no incentive to negotiate lower supplier costs. He found that it was often more interested in raising wholesale prices than in lowering them.

When will this government finally start taking the side of Ontario consumers instead of lining the pockets of foreign suppliers?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I've never heard of Calvados. It's interesting the NDP have. I'd recommend you try Pelee Island wines.

After question period, I'll explain to him how minimum prices don't affect the high end; they affect the low end. I understand. But I would urge all Ontarians: Buy Niagara, buy Essex county, buy Prince Edward county—

it's a growing and booming industry that's employing more Ontarians. I look forward to your supporting the initiatives we're doing to build a better wine industry for all Ontarians with greater export potential.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am standing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —and members continue to ignore the fact that I'm standing. Thank you.

New question.

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MUNICIPALITIES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question this morning is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As this House is quite aware, there has been some discussion recently around the issue of interest arbitration. We've heard a variety of concerns expressed with respect to the proposed reforms to the arbitration system, and I understand that some of these concerns were originally raised by the province's municipalities. In fact, I know it has been a long-standing issue. I can remember years ago being at a meeting with LUMCO, the large urban municipalities, and I remember Mayor McCallion's passionate advocacy of reform of the arbitration system.

Municipalities have difficult decisions to make in their communities and are dependent on the government's support on issues such as this. The back-and-forth on this issue must be both confusing and unsettling for them.

Speaker, can the minister please tell us what steps our government is taking to reassure Ontario's municipalities that we hear their concerns and are committed to working with them in reforming the system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just say, we certainly value the relationships that we have with our municipal partners and would never ignore the advice of mayors, including and especially the mayor of Mississauga. We would certainly not.

Municipalities have specifically asked us to make changes to the arbitration system to help them control costs. In fact, the former president of AMO, Gary McNamara, said in August that he wanted to see all of us in this chamber work together on arbitration reform so that municipalities wouldn't have to do it on their own.

The budget bill that we put forward, Mr. Speaker, included those reform provisions that would have reformed the arbitration system. Unfortunately, those provisions were taken out of the budget bill. We were aghast to see the Conservatives at the head of that parade. Now I understand there's a private member's bill that wants to reintroduce some of those provisions. We needed the support of the opposition in the first place to support those provisions.

The Premier has said that we will reintroduce those provisions, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to work with our municipalities to reform the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Minister. It's good to hear that our government will continue to work with municipalities to help ease the burden caused by interest arbitration costs. I know many municipalities have expressed how much they value the supports our government has already provided and will be reassured to hear that we will continue to work with them on this matter.

However, we all know that the Ontario government is facing its own fiscal pressures, and we need the support of all our partners, including our municipal partners, to help balance the budget. Municipalities have suffered under previous governments that downloaded costs to municipalities. I know that my own municipality of Guelph certainly appreciates the fact that we are uploading court security costs.

Speaker, through you to the minister, how is our government providing support to Ontario municipalities so that they can navigate these challenging economic times?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is a really important question because it's one that speaks to that very important relationship between the province and municipalities, the balance of costs that are shared and who takes responsibility for which pieces.

As recently as the AMO conference this summer, we recommitted to continuing the uploading process on schedule, Mr. Speaker, which will, by 2018, have a net benefit for our municipality of \$1.5 billion a year. That means that municipalities have more room on their property tax income to deliver the services they need.

We would expect the support of the official opposition on that uploading, on the investments in roads and bridges, on the gas tax for transit, on the investments in affordable housing—that whole range of issues. We have not had that support, Mr. Speaker. We need that support. We'll continue to work with municipalities, but it would be great if the members opposite, in both parties, would work with us on that as well.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Energy. It must feel like the vultures are circling you, just waiting to dive in and have at you. You can avoid all this, Minister. Just honour the committee's request, honour the Speaker's ruling, and quit hiding the documents.

You're a lawyer. You know what's coming next. Is your career really worth being the fall guy for the former energy minister's deals, the fall guy for the Premier? It seems he has left you out of the succession plans anyway. He has left you out in the cold. You're in this alone. They've abandoned you. End the pain today and turn over the documents.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I've thought of my colleagues as many things, but never as a vulture.

I appreciate the ruling that the Speaker made on this very important issue, and the ruling contained a number of terms. It contained terms with respect to documents relating to two gas plants, two gas plants that no party in this House believes should have gone ahead. So we're all on the same page. We're all on the same page with respect to the ruling, I believe, and part of the ruling was that there be meetings among the House leaders, and so I'll be referring the second question to the government House leader to give us an update on the progress of those discussions. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the minister has been cleaning up for his colleagues' mistakes ever since becoming the Minister of Energy. Minister, your predecessor has left you on the hook for the failed Green Energy Act and the failed FIT programs. Just this morning, we learned that FIT is now costing the province \$4 billion a year, and now your gang has left you on the hook for the billion-dollar, politically motivated seat-saver program.

Ask yourself, is your career worth being the fall guy for the Premier? The longer you wait, the worse it gets. You know what to do here, Minister. Turn the documents over today.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, I remind the member of your words to this Legislature: "I, too, have immense faith in the abilities of the honourable members of this House. I know that a solution can be found to this impasse. All sides need to exercise sobriety in this. Political fortunes should not be the motive for eroding the supremacy of Parliament or ignoring the best interests of citizens in this province." I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that the honourable member heed your words as he goes forward.

The fact of the matter is that all sides of the House believe that neither of these plants should have gone forward, and the Minister of Energy has done an outstanding job in moving forward with this file. All that we are asking is that we find a way to balance the interests of taxpayers with the rights of the committees that have come forward and that we respect the ruling you put forward about a week ago. Again, Mr. Speaker, I call on members of the opposition to respect what you've said and to allow the process to continue.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Jonah Schein: My question is for the Premier. The government has taken another U-turn when it comes to the much-delayed Eglinton LRT. Today we learned that the LRT will not be operated by the TTC. They'll be operated by a separate private company. Transit users fear that this will mean higher fares, poorer service and more difficulty in transferring between lines. Why is the government once again switching tracks on Toronto's long-delayed transit plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Far from switching tracks, Mr. Speaker, our goal has always been to have a seamless system along the Eglinton line, seamless from the transit rider's perspective. So same fare, same transfer, seamless for commuters—that has always been our objective, Mr. Speaker, in building the Eglinton LRT. We're focused on delivering that service to the people along that line and for the commuters who come into the city.

Toronto residents, I think, Mr. Speaker, are less concerned about whether it's a Metrolinx employee or a TTC employee. They just want to make sure that the line is going to run. They want to make sure it's delivered on time. They want to make sure that the service is reliable. So that's what we're going to deliver, Mr. Speaker. We've been working with the city of Toronto from the beginning of this project, and we will continue to work with the city of Toronto on this project.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Back to the minister: The people of Toronto do not believe this government. The last thing that Toronto needs is a 407 of transit, with transit commuters joining drivers and paying more and more every day. City councillors, transit experts and the chair of the TTC all fear that this new plan will mean increased fares. It will mean reduced service levels and poorer conditions on transit lines, poorer coordination of transit lines. Why is the Premier supporting Metrolinx in a scheme that seems to put the needs and the interests of public-transit users last?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think one of the most surprising things about this debate, this transit debate in this Legislature over the last three years, has been that the NDP has consistently stood up and argued against public transit, consistently, starting with the previous leader, Howard Hampton, not supporting new subway cars; the air-rail link—consistently fighting against that investment in transit. I would have thought that the NDP would have been an advocate, would have been a champion for public transit. Instead, they pick away at the projects; they create indecision. They create doubt in the public's mind instead of saying, "This is a very good project. How can we work with you to make it better?"

Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to work with the city of Toronto. This is a critical, critical line for the city of Toronto. The members from Toronto should know that, and they should be supporting us on this.

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FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Joe Dickson: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Over the summer, one of my constituents visited my office demanding to know more about what the government is doing to install sprinklers in retirement homes

and long-term-care homes. Her mother is in an older retirement home that is not equipped with sprinklers.

This individual is actually an avid fan of question period and remembers watching a particular session in May when the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek stood in the House and said that the technical consultations now being conducted by the Office of the Fire Marshal are a waste of time.

Minister, can you please answer this question for me?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Ajax–Pickering for this important question. I have been waiting for an opportunity to clear the record on this issue. First, I appreciate the passion that the member of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek brings to this issue, as I believe everyone does in this Legislature. Unfortunately, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is misrepresenting the legislative process, and has been—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am standing. The minister will withdraw.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I withdraw. “Inaccurately”—is that the best word? Okay. Inaccurately—the legislative process, and had he done his homework he would know that before you make a change to the fire code, a technical consultation must be conducted. Experts such as the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs support our technical consultations.

This government takes seniors’ safety very seriously. That’s why we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that, when we implement sprinklers in our older retirement homes and long-term-care homes, we do it right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is again for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, it’s nice to know that this government is taking a responsible yet decisive approach to this very important issue. Clearly, much can be learned from this exercise to ensure that we implement the right policy. I think we all understand that a one-size-fits-all solution won’t work, as Ontario’s retirement and long-term-care homes can be found in urban and rural settings and are connected to different water services. All of these factors need to be considered, I’m sure.

But with that said, Minister, how long will the technical consultation take?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, we’ve expedited the technical consultation process by four months. The technical committee will deliver its initial recommendations this fall and has committed to making sure more retirement and long-term-care homes across the province are equipped with sprinklers. But we realize sprinklers are not the only solution. That’s why we’ve developed a multi-pronged approach to fire safety in homes for vulnerable Ontarians, by also focusing on training, inspection and automatic door closures. Kevin Foster, president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, recently told my office he is pleased this issue is

a priority and his organization is committed to expediting the work to provide workable recommendations.

We’ve taken strong actions to improve the safety of Ontario’s most vulnerable citizens, and I look forward to the recommendations that will be brought forward by the technical committee.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, it’s no secret that when Liberal Party campaign advisers like Greg Sorbara stressed the necessity of implementing the seat-saver program as a last-ditch effort for the Premier to hold on to power, they knew they needed a fall guy.

Everyone knows that the Premier will do anything and say anything to hold on to power. But what is most shocking is how the Premier was actually bold enough to choose you, Minister, as his fall guy—a fellow lawyer, and most of all, the single Liberal cabinet minister outside the inner circle who poses the biggest threat to assume the Premier’s role as leader of the Liberal Party.

Minister, why are you protecting the same Premier who defends an incompetent health minister to the bitter end but tries to tarnish your brand and leadership credibility?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You’d think by the tone of all the questions that they were actually insistent that the power plants remain in Oakville, but that would not be the case. And since that isn’t the case, then all parties would have been in exactly the same position, which is determining what happens next. The issue that we have been working on is how not only to reach a resolution but to find the right time to speak to the resolution. I spoke to the Mississauga resolution when it had been reached. The Oakville matter is still the subject of discussions. We have the Speaker’s ruling. We’ll be complying with the ruling and respect the terms of the ruling. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The only ministers who look happy over these today are Minister Wynne, Minister Duncan and Minister Murray. They’re the only ones smiling today.

Back to the Minister of Energy: Minister, either you just don’t comprehend the gravity of the situation you’re in, or maybe you simply don’t care about transparency and accountability. Or perhaps you have simply taken the bait and the Premier’s office has actually convinced you that withholding documents is a smart decision.

Minister, don’t be fooled. Don’t think that the media training that you’ve received will protect you from being held in contempt. Being held in contempt is unfortunate for you, your career and your leadership ambitions. But you can change course if you just stop protecting Dalton McGuinty’s Liberal campaign team when you really want to be building yours. Minister, will you do the right thing? Will you release the documents today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Respect for the rulings made by the Speaker is paramount. That ruling had a number of terms, one of which was a date and another of which was a suggestion or encouragement that the House leaders get together. The government House leader has updated this House on those discussions. I understand they're still ongoing, and I suspect and I hope that my friend opposite would want all members of the House to fully and completely respect the order made by the Speaker in all of its terms, not just in some of its terms—and that's exactly what we're doing.

OBSTETRICAL CARE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Health. Windsor Regional Hospital's neonatal intensive care unit is one of the best in the province and it's operating at almost full capacity, but the CEO of the hospital is warning that the NICU might be downgraded from a level 3 to a level 2, losing the ability to treat babies born before 32 weeks. This would force up to 60 babies and 300 pregnant women to London, Toronto or even Detroit for this kind of care.

My question is simple: Does the minister think that it's right for new parents with fragile babies to be forced far away when they could be treated in their home hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I think the parents in this province want when they have a baby that needs intensive care is that that child receive the finest care possible. I think that commitment to quality is something that we agree on.

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We also agree that care closest to home as possible is vitally important, and whenever possible, that care should be provided as close to home as possible. Sometimes babies are born who are so sick they need an intensity of care that cannot be provided at every hospital in this province. I can tell you that that is an issue I know is under discussion now. We will always make the decision based on what's best for those little children.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: In 2009, the Minister of Finance said the following at a funding announcement at the Windsor NICU: "Windsor Regional will probably be the premier centre for this type of care in the province."

That was a short four years ago. Why, only four years later, is this government cutting health care services for Windsor families and their vulnerable infants by downgrading the NICU to a level 2?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I actually have personal experience in a NICU. When my twin grandchildren were born, they spent some time there, as did I and as did their parents. I saw first-hand the quality of care that is provided in NICUs.

I can tell you that parents want their child to get the care they need when they are very, very vulnerable. We will always make decisions based on what's best for those babies.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. I know our government is committed to fighting all invasive wildlife species across Ontario. We've made big strides over the past decade. Invasive species pose a huge threat to our lakes, ecosystems and industries, and I know that your ministry has recently implemented Ontario's invasive species strategic plan that's going to create some formal mechanism to collaborate with all levels of government and stakeholders, including First Nations.

Minister, what is the strategic plan to prevent and limit the impact of invasive species here in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for Willowdale for asking this very important question. Our government is very concerned about the threat of invasive species and remains committed to limiting their impacts on Ontario's ecosystems.

Recently, we held a grand opening for the Invasive Species Centre in Sault Ste. Marie. Our colleague David Oraziatti from Sault Ste. Marie attended on behalf of the province. This centre will be serving as a forum for the governments of Ontario and Canada to work collaboratively on management and research of invasive plants and aquatic species. Frankly, this is a historic moment for Ontario. This innovative facility is the first of its kind in Canada.

We're also, of course, thrilled with the introduction of Ontario's invasive species strategic plan. Our plan will build strong networks with conservation groups, including the federal government, our First Nation partners and neighbouring US states as well. Certainly, this is a comprehensive strategy. We'll improve our ability to prevent, to detect and to respond to the threat of invasive species like the emerald ash borer and the Asian carp.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, in particular I want to raise the issue of Asian carp. They are posing a real threat to our lakes, ecosystems and industry. They haven't yet made their way into Ontario, but I can tell you, Minister, in Chicago and in the state of Michigan, they are having a real problem with Asian carp, and Asian carp are just nipping at the edges of our own Ontario Great Lakes here. Keeping that in mind, I'm starting to get questions from constituents, even in Willowdale, asking about this.

Minister, specifically, what are you doing to defend against the Asian carp threat in Ontario? Because I want to take the message back to my Willowdale constituents.

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: This is no laughing matter, Mr. Speaker. It's important to everybody in the province of Ontario. Asian carp pose a significant threat to our province and to the many industries that depend on our Great Lakes, including the \$230-million commercial fishing industry. That's why we've recently joined the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee, a collab-

orative effort, again, between our government, the federal government and US federal and state governments. Joining this committee will enable us to formally share information and employ new and innovative techniques aimed at preventing Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes system.

Also, in 2005, our government took action back then. We took a defensive stance on this issue by banning the possession of live Asian carp in Ontario. Since 2010, we have seized over 39,000 pounds of Asian carp that were destined for Ontario markets. So I can promise everyone in the Legislature and all Ontarians that we will continue to take strong action like this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is to the Minister of Energy this morning as well. I'm not exactly sure what the minister is doing. He was given a clear order a week ago by you, Mr. Speaker. He knows what he's doing is wrong. He knows he's been told to turn over the documents on the power plants. He knows that he's doing the Premier's dirty work right now. I don't know why he isn't turning the documents over now. It just doesn't make any sense.

He knows that the cost is being borne by families in Ontario on cancelling those two power plants. We want to get to the bottom of this. The people of Ontario want to get to the bottom of this. Sadly for the minister, he's become the sacrificial lamb for that floundering government over there. He's turning on a spit, and not doing what needs to be done.

Speaker, can the minister tell the House when he's going to stand up to the Premier, when he's going to do the honourable thing and when he's going to turn those documents over? He should do it today.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the premise of the member's question is quite simply wrong. You made a ruling a week ago. In that ruling you quoted Speaker Milliken, and I think it sums up your ruling in an excellent way. It says: "It seems to me, that the issue before us is this: Is it possible to put into place a mechanism by which these documents could be made available to the House without compromising the security and confidentiality of the information they contain? In other words, is it possible for the two sides, working together in the best interests of the Canadians they serve, to devise a means where both their concerns are met?"

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I'm disgusted with this line of questioning. You have asked for co-operation between the three House leaders, and I would hope that the Progressive Conservative Party would come to those discussions with the spirit of co-operation and openness that you have asked for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, it's quite clear from where I sit that the people of Ontario are disgusted with this government—their arrogance when it comes to this issue.

You made a clear ruling that they should turn over the documents. Why are they stalling? Why are they waiting? What's in those documents that they don't want the people of Ontario to see?

This member over here, Rob Leone—his privilege was breached by the Minister of Energy; that was quite clear in your ruling last week. Why is the Minister of Energy not complying with this? Why is he falling on the sword for the Premier? Why is he carrying the load for the economic development minister who made all these mistakes two, three years ago? Why is Minister of Energy Bentley having to fall for this?

It doesn't make any sense to me, Minister. You're above this. Why don't you turn over those documents today and do what's right for yourself and for the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The member's theatrics don't make what he's saying any more accurate. The simple fact of the matter is that the documents will be released. We have made that clear.

At the same time, the Auditor General of Ontario, an officer of this Legislature; you, Mr. Speaker, in your ruling; and opposition members in their discussions have certainly identified the fact that this is a complex situation and there are a number of competing interests. The question that we have right now is: How can we balance those interests to protect the interests of taxpayers, at the same time balancing them with the interests of the committee?

They are the discussions that we're undergoing right now, Mr. Speaker. We had about a two-hour meeting last night between House leaders. I look forward to further discussions this afternoon, and I would hope that all opposition members will stand behind their House leaders as we find a co-operative way to address this situation.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question? The member from—Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and since you had problems identifying me, I had problems identifying you this morning.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's about time we smile in here a bit.

My question is to the Minister of Health. In my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, the Manitoulin Central Family Health Team in the town of Mindemoya—does anybody know where that is?—is working out of trailers and cramped spaces in the basement of their local hospital.

After two years working on the capital expansion plan, and despite the best efforts of local stakeholders, the family health team has no response to their plan. So the hardship continues—working out of those trailers and cramped spaces.

1130

Can the minister let my constituents know when this important project will finally be approved?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for raising this issue. We know how important family health teams are, Speaker; that's why we've created 200 of them.

The people of Mindemoya deserve access to the best possible care. The staff at the family health team—the doctors and the other professionals there—also deserve to work in a building that reflects the importance of what they do.

I will undertake to take a look at this application and see where we are with it. Thanks again to the member for raising the issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Minister, for that response. The constituents from Manitoulin will look forward to getting that response going forward.

However, the patients of this family health team include some of the sickest and most vulnerable in Ontario, including many from First Nations, and there are many on Manitoulin Island. The minister can talk a good game about the importance of family health teams and health equity, but she needs to follow up this talk with action to help those that are most in need.

Will the minister do the right thing and accept the capital expansion plan or at least explain what barriers are preventing her from supporting it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said in the answer, I am more than happy to undertake to find out what's happening in Mindemoya to the family health team there.

Family health teams are a very important innovation in primary care in this province. I'm very happy to see the members opposite—in fact, I would say that members from all sides of this House have approached me at various times looking for the creation of family health teams or expansion of family health teams because we know that they provide excellent care. They're interdisciplinary teams, Speaker. They include nurses and nurse practitioners, social workers, dietitians and a range of health care professionals who provide holistic care for people in a way that I can say both patients and providers celebrate.

Thank you to the member, and I will undertake to look into this question.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. There are many issues facing this House and certainly Ontario.

One of the most significant ones in my riding, and I suspect in all ridings, is the issue of youth unemployment, youth violence and what it is we're going to be able to do to expand some of the programs we've put in place. It's interesting: One of the barriers, believe it or not, in my riding is a postal code. Because of a postal code, which averages out the income base in my riding, youth cannot access particular programs.

But I know the minister has put in place some really good programs. I know he's looking at how he can expand those programs, and I think it's something that all of us will be able to benefit from, in terms of what's accessible next year for our communities.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for this very important question.

I'd like to take the opportunity to talk about a fantastic program that my ministry supports, which is the youth in policing initiative. It was referenced and in fact expanded in the recently announced government youth action plan responding to the unfortunate violence we saw in this city this past summer. This program creates employment opportunities for youth in priority neighbourhoods, while also importantly strengthening relationships between youth and police.

It's not only the YIPI program, the youth in policing program, we've expanded. The summer jobs program for our young people is also part of the foundation of our youth action plan. We're expanding 270 new after-school jobs each year throughout the school year in communities across Ontario, and also 440 new jobs through our summer jobs for youth program, which is very successful. I know a lot of the members throughout this House, including the opposition, appreciate the work of the government that's providing support for students through summer jobs. That's 710 new jobs right there.

There's much more to be done, of course, but this is important work for the young people in our province.

VISITOR

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I was remiss in not introducing one more guest I have. He is the co-owner of Khao San Road, ranked one of the best Thai restaurants here in Toronto. I'd like to welcome Montgomery Wan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order, but we always welcome our guests.

The member from Simcoe-Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. My point of order isn't as tasty, but it's very important. I seek unanimous consent to move a motion to have the Legislature restrike its standing committees.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Unanimous consent has been asked. Do I hear unanimous consent for the restriking? I heard a no.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: It gives me great pleasure to welcome members of the Armenian community who are here today to celebrate Armenian Independence Day. Specifically in the west members' gallery, I want to welcome Father Gomidas Pandssian, Lorig Barboushian, Vartan Kargotsian, Hratch Melconian, Sam Manougian, Sevan Manougian—my constituents—Michael Boghosian and Greg Chitilian.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

Mr. Michael Coteau: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce Harout Manougian, who is the trustee from my beautiful riding of Don Valley East. Welcome to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Soo Wong: I, too, want to welcome special guests to the Legislature today, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce Raffi Sarkissian, Daron Keskinian, Razmig Tchakmakian, Vahan Ajamian, Varant Marsim, Krikor Shahinian, Hratch Aynedjian, Levon Poladian, Mark Atikian and Vartan Kargotsian. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Michael Harris: It's my pleasure as well to introduce the folks from the Armenian National Committee of Toronto. Welcome to Queen's Park, and congratulations again on the 21st anniversary of Armenian Independence Day.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Michael Harris: Twenty-one years ago, Armenians went to the ballot box to decide whether to establish their own republic. They voted overwhelmingly in favour of independence and freedom, giving their families and future generations the hope and possibility of a better life.

With its ancient history and culture—the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as its religion—Armenia today is proudly free of the remnants of the former Soviet empire.

Now, from the crossroads of Eastern Europe and western Asia, Armenia is pursuing its destiny among a community of nations as a multi-party democratic country. Over the last two decades, the international community has seen Armenia make huge strides toward prosperity, thanks to the efforts of its citizens.

Here in Ontario, we have a strong and growing community of Armenian Canadians, and I know your hearts swell with pride when you look at the achievements of your families, friends and loved ones back home.

But there are still real challenges that the Armenian community is facing at home. In fact, just on August 31, Azerbaijani military officer Ramil Safarov was transferred from Hungary to Azerbaijan to serve what was supposed to be a life prison sentence for a brutal murder of an Armenian military officer in 2004. Instead, upon

his return home, he was pardoned and released. These developments are a real concern to Armenian Canadians, who want peace to be maintained back home. This murder should be condemned, not rewarded.

I stand here today to support Armenian Canadians as they continue their fight for peace in their homeland.

ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Michael Prue: I, too, rise to salute the Armenian community as they come here today to celebrate the 21st anniversary of independence from the Soviet Union.

Armenia, as has been said, has a very long and ancient history going back, and you can find references throughout the New Testament in the Bible.

Armenians also suffered genocide during 1915 and the following years, and a diaspora occurred around the world. To Ontario's everlasting credit, people like Sir Henry Pellatt and Archbishop McNeil helped to bring orphaned Armenian youth from Armenia to Ontario. They became known as the Georgetown Boys, and they prospered very hugely in this country. But in prospering, they never forgot their Armenian roots, they never forgot the people who helped them to come here and they never forgot the atrocities that had happened to them and to their families.

Every year, it has been my honour to attend the remembrance, and I must say that it is a very dignified remembrance of those years. We, as the Ontario government and the people in Canada, must never forget that as well.

But today, we are here to celebrate the accomplishments of the Armenian community in Ontario and the accomplishments of the Armenian diaspora around the world and of those people still in Armenia. I wish them all the best, both in their ancestral home and here, because this is a truly unique and powerful culture of which they ought to be very proud.

ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

Ms. Soo Wong: Today I stand in this House to extend greetings to all Armenians in Ontario celebrating Armenian Independence Day. After over 70 years of Soviet rule, Armenia became an independent state on September 21, 1991.

While Armenians may be a young nation, they have much to be proud about. In its brief existence, the country has experienced economic growth. New sectors, such as precious stone processing, jewellery making, information and communications technology, and tourism have begun to supplement more traditional sectors such as agriculture in the economy. In addition, the monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin and the water resorts of Lake Sevan continue to be a beautiful attraction for tourists.

The first wave of Armenian migration to Canada arrived in the late 1980s and helped with the vital role in building our great country. Today, Armenian Canadians

contribute to the cultural diversity of Canada and to this great province of Ontario.

Ontario is a proud collection of different histories, traditions, languages and beliefs. As a province, we draw strength from our diversity.

Armenian Independence Day allows us to celebrate the invaluable contributions that the Armenian-Canadian community has made to our province and to this country. On behalf of our government and the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt, I would like to send my best wishes, as Armenians in Ontario celebrate their important occasion.

INNISFIL CELTIC FESTIVAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from York South.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Last weekend, I was pleased to join with friends and constituents at the Innisfil Celtic Festival, billed as “Bagpipes by the Water on Beautiful Lake Simcoe.” Residents and visitors enjoyed a fun day of music, culture and sport, including musical performances, dancing, a strong man competition and an Ireland-versus-Scotland soccer game.

It helps remind us how much Ontario owes to its settlers from Celtic countries that helped create our province out of the wilderness. Millions of people today are descended from immigrants from Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and the Celtic festival is a great way to celebrate their contributions.

We were honoured by the presence at the festival of Irish Ambassador Ray Bassett and his wife, Patricia, who came to give their greetings and who spoke about the important ties between Canada and Ireland and other Celtic countries. I know that a great time was had by all.

Thanks go out to all the organizers, volunteers, performers and sponsors providing Innisfil such an enjoyable and exciting day. I want to particularly thank festival chair Angie Chisholm for her outstanding commitment and for the dedication and hard work of her team. I look forward to next year’s festival. I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that Angie herself is of Italian descent. That shows you about multiculturalism in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize. I think I said York South and not York–Simcoe, so the Speaker corrects his record and apologizes to the member.

TEACHERS

Mr. Jonah Schein: I grew up in a family of teachers, and I’ve always felt that September is like the start of new year: a time of new beginnings and possibilities.

My parents have both dedicated their lives to teaching and, like thousands of teachers across this province, they’ve worked hard to instill the value of learning, of reading, of writing, and of critical thinking to thousands of their students over many years.

1310

Like thousands of teachers in Ontario, teaching is a calling, a passion and a commitment to serve the community, and like thousands of teachers, my parents dedicated their lives to their work. In fact, they worked year-round, reading, thinking, planning in the classroom and outside their classrooms, to support the children and the parents in their schools.

And like the best teachers in Ontario, they went far beyond the three Rs. They taught their students about the world we live in and all of its challenges. They taught about fairness, about social justice, about environmental sustainability and about compassion.

Their former students are now the midwives, doctors, teachers, civil servants and community leaders who are making this a better city to live in.

I met with teachers in my riding this summer; they told me about the challenges their students face in their classrooms. They told me about the growing pressures on teachers and families and on children, and the impacts this has on our schools. They expressed their shock and concern, and their sense of betrayal too, that this government would create a new crisis in our schools and scapegoat teachers, just to serve their own political interests.

Most of all, they conveyed their love of teaching and their unwavering commitment to their students. I’d like to thank the many students and teachers in my life and in this province for the work that they do. I’d like to congratulate my mom, who started her 47th school year this year in September, continuing her passion for teaching by teaching future educators at Ryerson. And I’d like to wish the teachers, students and families of Davenport a very happy new school year.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I rise in the House today to talk about a wonderful event that took place in my riding yesterday. I held a town hall and information session on the review of the Condominium Act.

For me, this story began when somebody like Hanna walked into my office one day with a laundry list of issues she was having with her condo board, and as much as I tried to help, I quickly realized there wasn’t much I could do as an MPP to interfere in an individual case. Hanna was followed by Michael, Michael was followed by Stepan—and the list continues.

That’s when I quickly realized that while as an MPP I could not interfere in the details of a particular case, as a legislator perhaps I could do something to help improve the Condominium Act that governs the lives of so many condo dwellers.

That was back in the spring, when I first approached the Ministry of Consumer Services with my idea for a private member’s motion which spoke to the idea of an alternative dispute resolution system for people in the condo community.

From there to a town hall that was co-hosted by the Ministry of Consumer Services in late summer—so I first

broached it in late spring, and by late summer we were already hosting a town hall. That to me, in the world of government time, is like a New York minute. I was very, very pleased that the Minister of Consumer Services, Margaret Best, has taken on this case to go beyond what I had originally started with, which was fairly narrow in scope, speaking only to resolution of disputes, and is going to do an entire overview of the act.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION

Ms. Laurie Scott: September 16 to 22 has been proclaimed Legion Week by the Ontario command of the Royal Canadian Legion. As my friend Al Mayo reminds me, the Royal Canadian Legion is one of the largest community service organizations in Canada.

In my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, we are fortunate to have 16 Legion branches, some going back as far as 80 years. Although best known for their annual Remembrance Day ceremonies and support for veterans and their families, Legion branches are active contributors to their community.

Last Saturday, a celebration was held to mark a special day for my youngest branch. In Minden, members of Branch 636 gathered to mark its 25th anniversary. I was pleased to sit beside Mabel Hewitt Brannigan, who was not only a founding member, but who helped the Legion secure its present location.

In a speech given in 1988, founding President Tony Samarilo said, "When you are ... starting up a Legion branch with fresh people, who have never been members before, who know very well that they will be loaded with work, at no salary, then we know that deep in the hearts of such men and women is the memory of those who gave the supreme sacrifice, and by building a new Legion, in a township that has never had one before, their sacred memory is further strengthened. Their memory gives us all the drive to do good deeds for our Minden-area community...."

He went on to say that the branch would be forever grateful for the financial and moral assistance rendered by other neighbouring Legion branches—true comradeship in action.

The branch has donated \$200,000 to local organizations, and I wish President Thelma Lee and Ladies' Auxiliary President Debbie Fisher continued success for their ongoing activities.

ITALIAN WALK OF FAME

Mr. Mario Sergio: On Friday, September 21, 2012, the fourth annual Italian Walk of Fame will be taking place in our city of Toronto, more specifically in Little Italy, la piccola Italia.

The Italian Walk of Fame will recognize four distinguished individuals of Italian origin who through their work, each in their own particular field, have made a remarkable contribution to our community, receiving accolades and recognition worldwide.

This year's honourees are: Carlo Baldassarra, co-founder of Greenpark Homes; Maria Grazia Cucinotta, the award-winning international actress of *Il Postino*, or *The Postman*; Joe Pantoliano, the Emmy Award-winning actor from *The Sopranos*; and Beverly D'Angelo, a Golden Globe nominee for her role in *Coal Miner's Daughter*.

The honourees, with their talent, vision and diligent work ethic, have enriched our lives at home and abroad. These individuals have manifested deep passion and professionalism in their work, and continue to practise and carry on with pride their love for their Italian heritage.

On behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the inductees and to the organizers of the fourth annual Italian Walk of Fame.

SAM YOUNG

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today and highlight a Diamond Jubilee recipient from my riding of Dufferin-Caledon. It is a privilege to be asked to nominate deserving members of our community for Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medals.

Sam Young is one of those deserving Canadians. As the owner of the Shelburne Golf and Country Club, Sam is a respected community businessman. As an accomplished coach, instructor and mentor of junior golfers, Sam has won many accolades for his teaching and coaching skills from the Canadian Professional Golfers' Association, not the least of which was being inducted to their hall of fame last year.

Moreover, Sam dedicates himself to his community by generously supporting many local organizations. He has coached minor hockey and served on a number of local community committees, including the Shelburne economic development committee, the Orangeville and district small business enterprise board and the Group of Six productions at Grace Tipling Hall.

Sam is a member of the Ontario junior golf tour championship and a retired golf pro. He's very active on many golf association boards and committees, including serving as tournament director for the Pepsi Titleist Junior Golf Tour.

Sam supports and donates to Hospice Dufferin as well as Big Brothers Big Sisters of Dufferin, and he also joined the local White Ribbon Campaign, aimed at bringing an end to violence against women.

For more than 50 years, Sam has been a generous community supporter and an outstanding business leader. He has served as a role model for both his students as well as our community, and I am proud of his many accomplishments.

Speaker, I would ask that you join me in congratulating Sam Young on receiving a well-deserved Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order?

Ms. Soo Wong: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker. I just want to correct my record. In my remarks about Armenian Independence Day, I stated that immigration to Canada began in 1980. It should say "in 1880." So I want to correct the record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You have the right. That's a point of order, and you did correct your record.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

JAYESH'S LAW (WORKER SAFETY
AT SERVICE STATIONS), 2012LOI JAYESH DE 2012
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRAVAILLEURS
DANS LES STATIONS-SERVICE

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to worker safety at service stations / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la sécurité des travailleurs dans les stations-service.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd also like to mention that Jayesh Prajapati, whom this bill is named after—his sister, Vipa Prajapati, is here; his brother-in-law, Hemant Kumar; and Jayesh's young 11-year-old son, Rishabh Prajapati, is here for his dad.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

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Mr. Speaker, this bill amends various acts with respect to workers' safety at service stations and other places that sell fuel at retail. The Employment Standards Act, 2000, is amended to prohibit employers from penalizing employees if a fuel theft occurs while the employees are working. Secondly, the Highway Traffic Act is amended to provide that a person's driver's licence is suspended if the person is convicted of an offence involving the theft of fuel. Thirdly, the Occupational Health and Safety Act is amended to require employers who engage in the business of selling fuel at service stations and other places that sell fuel at retail to require customers to provide payment before they are given fuel. The act is also amended to require employers to provide training to employees involved in the sale of fuel at service stations and other places that sell fuel at retail.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND
INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(PERMANENT PARTIAL DISABILITY
SUPPLEMENTS), 2012LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(SUPPLÉMENT POUR INVALIDITÉ
PARTIELLE À CARACTÈRE PERMANENT)

Mr. Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to permanent partial disability supplements / Projet de loi 125, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne le supplément pour invalidité partielle à caractère permanent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mario Sergio: The bill amends section 110 of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, so that any pension a worker is eligible for under the Old Age Security Act, Canada, does not reduce the worker's permanent partial disability benefits for pre-1985 and pre-1989 injuries under the pre-1997 act.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSESOLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC
ATHLETES

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity.

Speaker, 170 athletes and supporters from Ontario represented Canada at the 2012 Summer Olympics and Paralympics in London. Events are being held to give Ontarians an opportunity to celebrate Canadian athletes. The celebration will culminate in Toronto with an athletes' parade this Friday, September 21. I look forward to honouring our Ontario heroes. Each of them made us proud. Canadians watched as these incredible athletes brought their best to the biggest stage in sport. Regardless of their standing or rank or whether they won a medal or achieved a personal best, or whether they absorbed a heartbreaking setback and managed it with poise, dignity and grace, each has inspired us.

Mr. Speaker, at the Summer Olympics, Ontario athletes helped bring home eight of 18 Canadian medals. At the Summer Paralympics, Ontario athletes helped to win 12 of 31 medals.

At the Summer Olympics, our successes included: gymnast Rosie MacLennan claiming an Olympic gold on the trampoline; a silver-medal performance by Adam Van Koeverden in men's kayak, his fourth Olympic medal in three consecutive Olympic games; and the first-ever medal, a bronze, won by our women's soccer team, which includes several athletes from Ontario. In my humble opinion, they delivered a golden performance.

At the Paralympics, swimmer Summer Mortimer brought home four medals: two gold, one silver and one bronze. Multisport Paralympian Robbi Weldon claimed gold in cycling, and Ontario Paralympians captured four medals, one silver and three bronze, on the track. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate each of our talented Ontario athletes who trained so hard and proudly represented us in London.

It is an exciting time to be a part of the amateur sports scene in Canada. Our government, the McGuinty government, is committed to working with our partners to build an amateur sports system across the province. Our investment in programs like Quest for Gold helps Ontario athletes to excel, providing athletes with direct financial assistance, enhanced coaching and training, and more competition opportunities. The program has already benefited 8,000 athletes since 2006 and we are certainly seeing the results: 79% of our Olympians and 90% of our Paralympians were Quest for Gold recipients.

We've also been working with our federal partners through programs like Own the Podium, designed to help Canadian athletes reach the podium and improve our standing in events like the Olympics and Paralympics.

We are working to provide our athletes with the best possible chances of success at the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games right here in the Toronto area. In addition to the economic benefits the games will bring, the investment in infrastructure will provide a legacy of world-class facilities, facilities where our amateur athletes can train and compete, and which will also provide Ontarians with access to improved community facilities. The 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games will also unite Canadians in our appreciation for sport and in celebrating the performances of Canadian athletes.

Mr. Speaker, supporting high-performance athletes is a priority for this government. Our athletes are amazing role models who inspire pride among us all. Through their pursuit of athletic excellence, they have demonstrated that they are all champions. I hope everyone will join me in offering congratulations to all of our Olympians and Paralympians. Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ministry statements?

It is now time for responses.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's an honour this afternoon to respond and to speak about the great accomplishments that our Olympic and Paralympic athletes have achieved in London in the 2012 Olympic Summer Games. Team Canada has an exceptionally dynamic group of athletes, with 281 Olympians and 157 Paralympians competing in 37 different sports. Our Canadian athletes showed a great

deal of courage and determination, bringing home 18 Olympic medals and 31 Paralympic medals.

It's also significant to point out the strong contingent of athletes who represented Ontario at the games. Ontario's Olympians brought home eight of our 18 medals, while Ontario's Paralympians brought home 12 of Canada's 31 total medals.

Canadian Olympic athletes do much more than just entertain us with their athletic abilities; they inspire and engage us to be the best that we can be. They instill the qualities needed to be a leader and they energize our youth to achieve their goals and dreams. You couldn't help but feel the energy from London in 2012, an energy that has stayed alive and strong since Vancouver 2010.

Every athlete goes to the Olympic Games with a drive to win. However, it is also important to remember the essence of what the Olympics are and how it contributes and enriches the society and cultural aspects of our society. I believe the best way to convey that is through the Olympic creed, which reads, "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not about triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well." The Olympic Games give us the chance to celebrate our shared humanity, and the object of the competitors should be to express this humanity by performing fairly and honestly to the best of their natural abilities.

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The Olympic spirit can be seen in all those who compete in the games, not just in those who win the medals. This spirit can be seen in athletes from across the world, who come together to develop their skills and gain experience. These athletes go to the Olympic Games not only for the love of their sport but for the love of their country. This is what the Olympic Games are really all about, and some might say it is what life is really all about as well.

Mr. Speaker, our Olympic athletes just finished their visit to Parliament Hill yesterday, and I think Prime Minister Harper said it well: Canadians have been captivated by the exceptional performances of our athletes. I couldn't agree more. For 31 days, the world watched as Canada fought hard, played tough and showed great poise, representing Canada on the world stage with great vigour and pride. Our athletes truly showed the world what it means to be Canadian.

It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and our entire PC caucus, to congratulate all of our Olympic and Paralympic athletes for their tremendous accomplishments at the London 2012 games. You have truly made us all proud.

Mr. Paul Miller: It gives me great pleasure to respond to the minister's statement about Olympic and Paralympic athletes and to welcome them to the Legislature today. On behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democratic Party of Ontario, I want to thank and congratulate each of the participants in these games. You did us proud this summer.

Not only thanks to the athletes but to the dedication of their families, their coaches and their friends. It is truly inspiring to see these athletes who are able to be in the Legislature today, especially in an Olympic/Paralympic year. What a wonderful high for everyone involved.

The dedication and years of training for those few moments of maximum competition, maximum physical effort, cannot be fully appreciated by those who have not gone through it. But we can recognize the sacrifice, the training and the commitment to being the best possible and to putting oneself on the international stage, out there for public scrutiny and comment. When I think of how tired I am after a hard-hitting fast game of hockey, I can't imagine the utter exhaustion of international-calibre athletes, and then add to that the extra effort of the Paralympic athletes. We are truly humbled.

I know that there are many programs to support athletes in this province, but I believe we could be doing better. The Quest for Gold program has certainly supported many of our athletes, but does it garner the maximum support that each of them deserves? It has brought in about \$6 million a year since its inception in 2006, including an infusion of \$10 million in the 2009-10 budget year. The problem with the Quest for Gold program is that it is a gambling initiative, not embraced by all Ontarians. It suffers the vagaries of the economy. So when we're feeling flush, we'll buy more lottery tickets, but when the economy is in a downturn, it's likely that fewer lottery tickets will be bought, so less money for the program.

It seems to me that there should be a more long-term, sustainable program that is less dependent on immediate economic fluctuations. How are we providing for those athletes working their way up through the ranks, through various competitive levels, to compete in the Ontario Summer Games and all the events that ultimately lead them to the Pan/Parapan Am Games and the Olympics and Paralympics?

We should be working with athletic associations to find out what they recommend to sustain support for long-term training requirements and, ultimately, competitive successes. We have only three years until the Pan/Parapan Am Games in 2015, and I would like to see Ontario establish a well-funded, sustainable program to support athletic excellence.

Although many sports are dependent on only one athlete's efforts, others require the physical excellence, ability to work in unison and trust that each team member can pull their weight, something that I would find to be even more demanding than the absolute concentration of the solo athlete.

When we think about these athletes starting out when they were quite young, having to perfect their sport as well as do their school work, develop their social network and grow up, we're more in awe of their achievements. Add to this the scant financial support available at the early levels to provide for competitive level athletes, and we realize even more how dedicated they and their families are to athletic excellence.

As we move toward the next big summer competition, the Pan/Parapan Am Games here in the GTA, we must enhance the programs we currently have in place and look for more ways to encourage government and private sector support of our dedicated athletes.

I know that our athletes aren't here to listen to politicians but to be celebrated by us for their dedication, their focus and their commitment to being the best they can and to making our province and our country proud of their efforts. Again, I thank and congratulate you for achieving the level of performance that you did in the London Games this summer. I want to wish each of you the best in the future, whether it's continued athletics or another path. You deserve the best that life can offer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to read a petition from my constituents of the riding of Durham. These are signed by Frank Agueci, Rob McJannett, Robert Purdy and Peter Barber, who have worked hard to bring this issue to my attention. It reads as follows:

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

I'm pleased that the Minister of the Environment is here to hear this. I present it to Mathilde, one of the pages.

CYCLING

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 25% of Ontario adults regularly cycle and over 50% of children cycle either daily or weekly;

"Whereas a cycling fatality occurs every month in Ontario and thousands of cyclists are injured each month;

"Whereas Ontario is lagging behind provinces like British Columbia and Quebec that have invested \$31 million and \$200 million respectively in cycling infrastructure;

"Whereas investing in cycling infrastructure in Ontario will create jobs and benefit the economy, reduce traffic congestion and pollution, protect those sharing the road, and encourage active transportation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario release a comprehensive cycling strategy for Ontario that includes dedicated funding to match municipal investments in cycling infrastructure, education initiatives to raise awareness about the rights and responsibilities of all road users, and a review and update of provincial legislation including the Highway Traffic Act and the Planning Act to ensure roadways are safe for all users;

"That the strategy set provincial targets and timelines for increasing the number of people who commute by bike and cycle recreationally."

I agree with this petition and I'll give it to page Leo to bring it forward.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have a petition signed by over 20 people.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are risks inherent in the use of ionizing, magnetic and other radiation in medical diagnostic and radiation therapy procedures; and

"Whereas the main piece of legislation governing these activities, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (HARPA), dates from the 1980s; and

"Whereas neither the legislation nor the regulations established under the act have kept pace with the explosion in imaging examinations, including image-guided procedures used in cardiology, radiation therapy, ultrasound, orthopaedics etc.;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish, as soon as possible, a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act to bring it up to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and covers all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I fully agree with these petitions, I sign them and pass them on to Sydney.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's plan to cut more than \$1 billion in medical funding will impact my doctor's ability to provide care for me and my family and is a serious risk to health care in our community and across the province,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Reverse the recent unilateral cuts to medical funding and negotiate in good faith with doctors for an agreement that will protect Ontario health care."

I agree with this, sign my name and give it to page Katherine.

1340

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children's aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children's aid societies."

I agree with this petition, I'll be signing my name to it and sending it with page Simran.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario halted construction and cancelled a project to build an electrical generating station in Mississauga in the autumn of 2011, during an election period, after construction was well under way; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has paid out \$190 million in penalties and costs to those under contract for the construction of this project; and

"Whereas Minister of Energy Chris Bentley has stated publicly that the Ontario Liberal Party campaign team made the decision to halt construction and cancel the project; and

"Whereas Minister Bentley has acknowledged that this action was taken to help win the seats of five existing Liberal Party members of the Legislature, including seats in Oakville, Mississauga and Etobicoke;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as tax- and ratepayers of Ontario to insist that the government of Ontario seek reparations and demand repayment from the Ontario Liberal Party to

refund all monies into the Ontario general revenue fund for all monies paid for the cancellation of the power plant in Mississauga, for what was ostensibly a Liberal seat-saver program and thus an election expense to retain the seats in the 2011 general election.”

I agree with this petition, I'll sign it and pass it to my page, Caelius.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

“Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

“Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

“Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

“That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route.”

I couldn't agree more, and neither could all of my constituents. I give it to Ethan to be delivered to the table and I'm going to sign my name. Thanks.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government's ongoing investment in the RVHS Ajax and Pickering hospital has created an outstanding community health care delivery system; and

“Whereas the Rouge Valley Health System Ajax-Pickering hospital's 10-year vision plan (as read in the Legislature by MPP Dickson) will be instrumental in ensuring the ongoing needs of the increasing population are met;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, sign this petition addressed the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario continue to invest in this family-friendly Ajax-Pickering hospital.”

I will attach my name to it. I thank you, and I will pass it to page Jenna.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt;

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and Oak Ridges moraine;

“Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries;

“Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt.”

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature and give it to page Christina.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north's economy; and

“Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

“Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately.”

I fully agree, sign my signature and send it with page Jasper.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Auditor General confirmed that no comprehensive evaluation was completed by the McGuinty government on the impact of the billion-dollar commitment of renewable energy on such things as net job losses and future energy prices, which will increase over 46% over the next five years; and

“Whereas poor decisions by the McGuinty government, such as the Green Energy Act, where Ontario pays

up to 80 cents per kilowatt hour for electricity it doesn't need and then must pay our neighbours to take it for free, and the billion-dollar cost of the seat-saving cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas power plants, have contributed to making the cost of Ontario power the highest in North America; and

"Whereas there has been no third party study to look at the health, physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has removed all decision-making powers from the local municipal governments when it comes to the location and size of industrial wind and solar farms;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support the MPP from Huron-Bruce Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it to page Leo.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Caelius to bring it to the Clerk.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government's plan to cut more than \$1 billion in medical funding will impact my

doctor's ability to provide care for me and my family, and is a serious risk to health care in our community and across the province,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Reverse the recent unilateral cuts to medical funding, and negotiate in good faith with doctors for an agreement that will protect Ontario health care."

I support this and sign my name.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the legislated cuts to the funding for ophthalmology diagnostic tests are up to 80%;

"Whereas these cuts were implemented without consulting physicians about the impact such cuts will have on the health care of patients;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect the ophthalmology services and consult with the physicians before making cuts to our health care."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with page Jasper.

1350

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is in serious need of modernization;

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is not in harmony with all the following acts, regulations, guidelines and codes: the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario, the radiation protection regulations of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the safety codes of Health Canada and the radiation protection guidelines of the International Commission on Radiological Protection;

"Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by Reza Moridi, the member from Richmond Hill, that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations, make recommendations on how to modernize this act, and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker. I sign it and pass it to page Roberto.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

WATER TESTING ANALYSE D'EAU

Mr. Grant Crack: I move that, in the opinion of this House, non-profit organizations serviced by private wells or other private water services should receive potable water testing services at no charge from local public health units and public health laboratories, in the same manner as rural homeowners currently receive water testing services.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Crack has moved private member's notice of motion number 28. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to start by acknowledging the fact that my mother and father, Wayne and Sylvia Crack, are watching at home this afternoon. I'd like to thank them for the continued support that they've given me. I feel privileged to have them in my life.

Good afternoon, colleagues. I'm very pleased to be able to stand here today in this historic Legislative Assembly to introduce my private member's resolution.

I want to begin by saying that as a relatively new member of provincial Parliament, with almost one full year of experience, I'm honoured to be able to serve the people of Ontario. I take this opportunity to once again thank the good people of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for having the confidence in me to represent their interests here at Queen's Park. As I've mentioned a number of times in this House previously, I had the privilege to serve as a local mayor, first of Alexandria and then of North Glengarry, for 11 years. It's this experience in public office—I'm confident I can bring an important perspective to policy-making in government here that represents the needs of rural Ontario.

Speaker, Ontario's strong foundation is built on its people. This foundation is built on many successes of hard-working people, over centuries, who have contributed in so many different ways to give us the quality of life that we enjoy each and every day. That is why I'm introducing my following motion, and I humbly request that all my colleagues in this House support it to move it forward.

I will read it again, Speaker. I move that, in the opinion of this House, non-profit organizations serviced by private wells or other private water services should receive potable water testing services at no charge from local public health units and public health laboratories, in the same manner as rural homeowners currently receive water testing services.

In Ontario, we have many, many non-profit organizations that do great work in our communities, and this motion is one way of supporting their great work and their accomplishments. The cost associated with water testing in rural Ontario was brought to my attention by members of a number of community organizations, non-profit organizations, in my riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, but more specifically in the Cumberland area east of Ottawa. I'd like to thank this opportunity to thank Ross Shorthill of St. Andrew's United Church for spearheading this campaign, and also to acknowledge Frank Shultz of St. Mark's Anglican Church; Gordon Kerluke of the Cumberland Lions Club; Ned Lathrop of St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church; Waseem Mehmoud and Intiaz Ahmed of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Centre; Norm Girard of the Cumberland Curling Club; and Rebecca Dufton of the Cumberland Community Association. Together, they brought this issue to the forefront.

Speaker, these community leaders, these hard-working volunteers, devote their time and efforts, and whatever resources they have and generate are invested back into our communities to improve the lives of the people they touch, yet they never ask for anything in return. That's why I'm proud to support their efforts here today in the House.

As I've noted in my letter to all my colleagues in this Legislature, in Ontario we are blessed with an abundant source of fresh water. Our great province borders on four of the five Great Lakes, and we have more than a quarter-million lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater resources. This natural wealth is a blessing and is the basis of our prosperity, growth and quality of life, and it's essential to our health and to our daily lives. Ontarians rely on clean, safe drinking water whether at home, at our places of worship and throughout our communities. We use water for personal use, recreation, farming and so much more. But with this great wealth comes responsibility, and all Ontarians have a role to play in protecting our fresh water.

Speaker, since the tragedy in Walkerton, without question, Ontario's drinking water meets strict standards, and the high levels of performance of our drinking water systems are continually improving. This is the commitment of our government. Protecting water at its source is the first step in ensuring every Ontarian has safe drinking water. Our government, over the course of the past nine years, has taken this endeavour very seriously. For example, we implemented the Clean Water Act, which helps protect drinking water from the source to tap with a multi-barrier approach that stops contaminants from entering sources of drinking water: lakes, rivers and aquifers.

More specifically, as an example of how thorough our government is about clean drinking water, rural Ontarians, and specifically those residences which are serviced by private wells and other private water sources, receive drinking water sampling or testing at no charge through the provincial laboratories operated by the Ontario public

health units. This service, at this time, does not extend to non-profit organizations that use facilities such as churches, community halls and community centres. Free water testing services assist homeowners by monitoring the safety of their drinking water quality and enable residents to work closely with local health units to address any potential issues that are identified.

The frequency of sampling and testing of drinking water and the associated cost vary among small drinking water systems and depend on local assessments done by local health units and the complexity of each individual system. In many cases, non-profit organizations in rural areas are required to pay upwards of \$240 per year. That's \$60 quarterly for water testing. This is a significant financial burden for these community organizations.

I'd just like to provide members of this assembly with the technical definition of a non-profit organization or a corporation. It's as follows: "A not-for-profit corporation carries on its activities without the purpose of" pecuniary "gain for its members. It is incorporated under the Corporations Act as a corporation that doesn't issue shares. It must have not-for-profit purposes, and use any profits to promote those purposes. The most common types are: charitable (including religious organizations), social clubs, service clubs, sporting and athletic organizations, professional and trade associations, ratepayers' associations, and other community organizations."

The numbers go on and on, Speaker. Many of these non-profit organizations are located in rural areas of the province and serve the general public in a variety of ways. They include recreational service clubs like les clubs Richelieu, Lions Club, 4H clubs, Rotary Clubs and also religious groups which host events such as fund-raisers, dances, breakfast, dinners and bake sales; that's just to name a few. These organizations provide much of the needed support mechanisms in rural Ontario and are critical to the health and wellness of our rural towns and villages. Of course, most non-profit organizations in small rural communities rely on donations and contributions to carry out the good work that they do.

1400

As rural residents know all too well, there is much more to clean, safe drinking water than routine and periodic laboratory testing, because we all know that water can be contaminated with biological organisms such as bacteria, parasites and viruses, with chemical agents such as nitrates and lead, and with a multitude of other toxins created by algae in surface water.

A well must be properly maintained in order to protect groundwater from contamination, and indeed, care of the entire private system, from water source to tap, must be checked and taken into account and consideration. Most certainly, preventable and routine maintenance is necessary: pumps, pipes, valves, storage tanks, reservoirs, meters and all fittings must be cared for. Sometimes chlorine must be used to disinfect water. On top of the testing fees, this also requires time and effort, and non-profit organizations must also cover the cost and maintenance of these well-water services.

Speaker, we all recognize the importance of affordable water quality testing in Ontario as safe, clean drinking water is vital. All Ontarians rely on clean drinking water. It's good for our health, our way of life and our future prosperity. Potable water testing is critical not just for private residents serviced by private wells or other private sources but is also critical to those non-profit organizations who carry out much of the crucial and necessary volunteer work in our rural Ontario communities, including some of the groups I mentioned earlier in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Essentially, today my goal is to deliver this message to my colleagues here in the Ontario Legislature, as I'm doing today, and to assist our hard-working volunteers in our rural communities as they continue to do the great work that they do in making our rural communities vibrant and strong. As well, they improve the quality of life of all Ontarians.

As such, I'm requesting the support of this House in recognizing the intent of this resolution. Thank you for your consideration. I hope that all can support me in this endeavour.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to speak to the resolution from the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell as it gives me another opportunity to talk about an issue that's a bit of a sore spot with many churches, Legion branches and other non-profit organizations in my riding of Leeds–Grenville. I have to say, though, right off the top, that I'm very supportive of this resolution, and I'll use the word "supportive" because, while we can all agree that water testing can be a serious burden on our non-profit groups, the solution outlined in the resolution has to be approached with some bit of caution. That's why I wish it was actually a government initiative, so we could get it into committee—not that this government has any aptitude for creating committees so that we can actually get legislation in them and get it passed, but they are having difficulty managing the minority.

This does speak to the issue of cost, and I think, in the member's speech just a few moments ago and his letter to members of provincial Parliament, that question is not answered. I think it's a valid point to put on the record today because, let's face it: Given the McGuinty government record on finances, the last thing that we want to do is to add more costs to our non-profits, our churches and our Legions. In fact, it's this government's penchant for trying to solve every problem by spending money that has really put us on this course for a \$30-billion deficit.

That's really the only concern that I would have with the resolution. I'm worried that while we know public health labs have the equipment and expertise to do the testing, we just have to get that question answered about what it will cost taxpayers. But certainly, when it comes to the intention of the motion to alleviate the burden of testing from the backs of places—in my riding, like that of the Toledo Legion—I'm firmly behind it.

I've talked about Toledo Legion Branch 475 in the past in this House. The president, Greg Williams, was

probably the first person in my riding to bring this issue to my attention. I've had a number of other people. The member opposite mentioned some churches. I also want to mention Chris Morgan, who's the secretary of the Seaway Valley Presbytery. I've submitted petitions to the member's issue in the past asking that regulation 319/08 be amended to allow non-profits and churches to be exempt from water testing, so I've been on the record.

But back to Legion Branch 475, because I think it's important to put it in perspective. They're a very small branch. They were pretty upset when the local health unit came knocking at the door, probably a little over a year ago, ordering them to start monthly testing. I can understand why they were upset. The Legion and the surrounding village boasted a 10-year track record of absolutely perfect water test results, and because those previous tests don't carry enough weight in the formula used to determine how often the tests are necessary, ultimately the health unit issued the order for them to do the monthly testing. For Branch 475, those monthly tests meant an additional \$720 per year, not including the expense of delivering the test samples to the private lab. I'm sure everyone can appreciate that for a small Legion branch, \$720, in this case, in a very small village, is not insignificant and could go a long way in improving the community and supporting a number of community initiatives had they not had to do that particular test.

So I support the motion by the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. I encourage him to talk to the folks that make the decisions over there to find out some of the costs. I truly believe that in his heart—I think he knows the government must step back before coming up with more red tape, more regulations, and appreciate how new rules will impact those people in rural Ontario in ridings like his or mine. No one wins when the government's actions, no matter how well intentioned, put the things we value most in our rural communities at risk.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to the motion, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to stand up and speak to this motion that will provide free water testing for rural non-profit organizations.

It's very important to ensure that we have safe drinking water across the province and that this safe drinking water and access to these tests are accessible. No one should be exposed to unsafe drinking water in the province. We learned our lesson in Walkerton. We learned a very tragic lesson about the importance of having clean, safe drinking water, and it exposed the deficiencies of legislation and showed that the province of Ontario has a greater role to play in ensuring safe drinking water.

Ontario is, as many of us know, a very diverse and vast geographic land mass. It's no secret that I live in northwestern Ontario. My riding alone is about 350,000 square kilometres. Consequently, there are many people who live in what the ministry terms TWMOs. We are townships without municipal organization, and it's im-

possible to provide the public services that are necessary, like safe drinking water or public drinking water, to people who live in these areas. I myself am only four kilometres outside of Dryden, but I have my own well and septic field.

I also have some experience with various—it's not just non-profit organizations that run up to these problems, that experience the financial limitations and maybe the inability to pay for regular tests. It's also some of the for-profit organizations and businesses. I know my family has a tourist camp up in Lac Seul, and they said it's very expensive because they have to send the samples and they are just over 100 kilometres outside of the nearest centre, so it's expensive and it's costly all the way around. If it's costly and prohibitive for businesses, I can only imagine how expensive and how difficult it is for some of our non-profit organizations.

1410

One non-profit organization that pops to mind when I think of my riding and home in Dryden is Second Chance Pet Network. They are an animal welfare organization that has sprung up in the last couple of years. They have undergone extensive fundraising through personal appeals to people in the community. They also participated in Pepsi's Refresh Everything Challenge, where they had two or three rounds of voting. Everyone in the community was voting for them—in fact, many people in our region were constantly voting for them—and they were successful in winning \$100,000. That has enabled them to buy a shelter—to build it from scratch. It's in an area that will be benefiting from this if this motion is passed. If we were to bring this forward, enact it and make it legislation, they would definitely welcome these changes.

There are some areas where this falls short. First of all, I'm concerned that this might be a form of downloading, that we might end up downloading these costs onto municipalities and public health units, which are already strapped for cash. But the big concern for me, in my riding, is with First Nations communities. In Ontario, we have whole communities that don't have access to safe drinking water, never mind the testing. They wouldn't be included in this motion, but they actually don't have the access.

So this is really a feel-good change. It's definitely a step in the right direction; I'm not going to dispute that. I do think there are many non-profit organizations that will benefit from this if it does go forward. But there is a gap; there's a real disconnect. You know, the member on the government side is concerned with making it easier to test water for some, which again is no doubt very important. But it's troubling that we still have entire communities in Ontario that lack this infrastructure and can't even have clean drinking water. There is a host of examples in my area.

Again, this is a step in the right direction. I would really like to see it passed, and I'd like to see us step up to the plate and do something to help some of these communities have access to the infrastructure that's needed. So I thank the member opposite for bringing this motion forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure for me this afternoon to have an opportunity to get a few words on the record in support of my good friend the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and his resolution.

You know, he's a new member here—he arrived last October—and is certainly following in the great tradition of his predecessor, Jean-Marc Lalonde, who served Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for so many years in such a great way. Jean-Marc, like Mr. Crack, was one of those grassroots politicians, the kind of guy who spent a lot of time in Alexandria at the local diner, taking the opportunity to listen to what the grassroots were saying, particularly on this kind of issue.

It recalls another time—I know he's talked to the Women's Institutes in his area—and reflects an earlier time in Ontario when the Women's Institutes came together in the late 1930s and promoted the pasteurization of milk in the province of Ontario as part of an approach to eradicate polio, which was a great menace to many communities, particularly rural communities, in the 1930s. As a responsible government of the day, the Liberal government of the Honourable Mitchell Hepburn, who of course came from Elgin, Ontario, brought in the pasteurization of milk.

This is the same approach that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is taking today. He's talking to church groups, he's talking to the Women's Institute in Alexandria, Ontario, and to many of those wonderful communities in the eastern part of the province of Ontario to get their thinking in terms of how we might be able to assist them in water testing.

You know, when you chat with these individuals who are so involved with these groups, it reminds me: On Tuesday, I had the opportunity to visit many of the exhibits at the International Plowing Match in beautiful Roseville, Ontario. Although it was a bit wet, it didn't dampen the spirit and enthusiasm that were there, when you take the opportunity to visit those tents sponsored by the local churches—the United Church, the Anglican Church and the Catholic church—and the opportunity to sample. I love apple pie. I had the opportunity to grab a couple of pieces of homemade apple pie by those church groups.

What the member is reflecting here today in his resolution is about those church groups. They've approached the member. He listens carefully and, through that process, he has brought forward this resolution here today. In fact, in rural Ontario, we all know how dependent we are on these church groups that step up to the plate.

Last Saturday, I was at the opening of the Warsaw Fall Fair in the marvellous municipality of Douro-Dummer in the county of Peterborough. Again, the church groups were there, and I said, "You know what? My colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is going to be bringing forward a resolution this Thursday that I think will help your situation in terms of water testing." They said, "Thank goodness for the hard-working member from

Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who's listening and bringing forward such a resolution." That's the kind of member he is. He listens carefully. He addresses situations and, indeed, has brought forward this resolution.

I sense today that he will get his support on all sides of the House, from the official opposition and, indeed, the third party. He has consulted widely with recreation groups, service clubs, the Lions Clubs and 4-H. This resolution needs to be passed, and I congratulate the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I will be brief because I know I have other colleagues who'd like to speak.

I will also be supporting this motion brought forward from the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. In my community, it will primarily impact rural churches and potentially some Legion buildings as well.

The reality is, we already have an infrastructure in place through the health units where the testing could happen. I think it's a small but important acknowledgment of the value of where we hold people who volunteer and give back to the community. Ultimately, those are the agencies, the organizations, the clubs, that are most impacted by the costs associated with this testing.

I'm happy to support it. I hope, in turn, when my private member's bill comes up about volunteerism and the removal of the cost of police record checks for volunteers, I will be looking to the other side for the same amount of support. So I'm happy to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is a pleasure to add a few words to this conversation.

To start out with, this is the type of bill that may not apply to every part of Ontario, but it certainly applies to my riding a whole lot. More than half of the residents of my riding are on wells, so that means that the churches, the camps, all of those non-profit agencies—the Knights of Columbus own many buildings where the community holds functions; same thing with the Lions Clubs, which own their own buildings in two communities in my riding—all of them would fall under the act. It certainly would not make for hundreds of demands, but it would help for those dozen or so not-for-profit agencies that are on well water and that presently have to pay.

In my riding, there are, as I say, tens of thousands of people who depend on well water. Where I live, I don't have city water. We bring our water to the health unit, and the health unit does whatever it has to do. It gives us back our little paper saying, "Keep on drinking," and life goes on. But for the clubs that do own their own buildings—the same thing with the churches, the same thing with the summer camps—they have the same source water as we do, which is, they pump it from a river or a lake or they have their own well, and they have to pay. So it would certainly help them.

But I also want to look at the other side of the coin, the other side being: If they don't pay, who will?

1420

We are extremely fortunate in Sudbury with the Sudbury and District Health Unit. Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, who's the chief medical officer of health at Sudbury and District Health Unit, is a phenomenal person. She is extremely progressive, she truly understands what public health stands for, and she is a huge champion for health promotion. The health unit has many, many good ideas. They have a strategic plan, actually—they're working on it, but they have released part of their strategic plan, and they tell stories. They are also the health unit that put forward a video that has been seen around the globe. You go on their website and you can see that people from all continents have come and looked at this video that was made at the Sudbury and District Health Unit. It's on how to talk about health without ever talking about health care, and it has everything to do with the social determinants of health.

I'm telling you all of the good work that my health unit has to do—I call it "my" health unit because they serve all of my riding; they also serve the riding of Sudbury, but they serve all of my riding—because their action plan is impressive, their strategic plan is even more impressive, and, you guessed it, the amount of resources they have to carry those out doesn't always meet the needs.

Here comes this tiny little issue of cost now. We all know that part of what a health unit does is not funded by the Ministry of Health. Although it has to do 100% with public health and it has to do with health care, it is funded by the municipal taxpayer. It is funded by the municipality. Here again we are talking about a level of government that's often hurting for money. In Sudbury, the CAA puts out the worst-roads awards every year. I am not pleased to tell you that Sudbury ranks right up there. We usually have the top five, and if you look at the top 10, we will be mentioned there at least six times. The infrastructure needs of the city of Greater Sudbury are such that the amount of money it has does not meet those needs—in infrastructure, in social services, in a number of other areas.

I don't think we're talking about tens of thousands of dollars a year. It would be good—I will be supporting the bill. I should have said this from the start; sorry about that. I will be supporting the bill. I'm looking forward to the bill going to committee and I'm looking forward to hearing from the people who will be picking up the tab for the not-for-profits that now won't have to pay for those water tests, to have a better understanding as to where the final tab will stand at and who will be picking it up.

The idea is great. I wouldn't say that it is something that had never been brought to me before. The social clubs in my riding certainly come to me for all sorts of projects, and I try to help out and I try to find sources of funding and everything for them. This is not a request they have never made or that I had never heard before,

but that doesn't mean it's not a good idea. It's certainly something that is worth exploring and something that is worth sending for second reading so that the people who will get affected—and I'm guessing most of the health units in the north will get affected—can come and tell us if this constitutes a bit of financial hardship. And the same thing with the municipality, which may actually end up picking up the tab for that idea.

So, good idea. You will have our support. We want to send it to committee for second reading. That will give us the opportunity to find out the dollars and cents associated with that private member's bill. So, good idea, and you have our support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to be able to stand in support of my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Unfortunately, it's a motion, not a bill, so it will be debated at this House and approved by the House, and then hopefully, someone will pick this up. In fact, I wish it were a bill.

It's interesting: It was articulated, I think, by the member from Kenora–Rainy River, who spoke to why water testing was done in the first place—good intentions, because we wanted to avert another tragedy. Then it was extended so that it would include those wells. But I think, unfortunately, the unintended consequence of that was how it was going to impact small not-for-profit organizations such as churches.

I'd like to think that here in this House, this is again an opportunity where we could really work together. In the last century, we actually put a person on the moon, and we were part of that. Remember? You would think we could find a way and a process to help local not-for-profits find a mechanism to test their water that isn't going to tap their resources to such an extent that they can't continue their good work. I would suspect there is a way that we could go about doing this. It wouldn't be extraordinarily onerous. It's not going to rip the bank and the heart out of the municipalities. In fact, it would support the good work that happens in churches.

If you think about it, just taking a church as an example, they're often the places where Meals on Wheels get their drivers from, or they're prepared in that local church, or you'll find people who take folks for end-of-life palliative care. It goes on and on: Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Beavers. All kinds of good and wonderful things happen in our church basements. Those are the things that help keep our kids off the street and produce all sorts of wonderful opportunities for learning and engagement and team work.

That cost alone, in another forum, would be horrendous. So testing the water so they can often go there, which is at virtually no cost to those organizations because that's what churches do, makes some sense. I think what we should be able to do is find a way that we could work together to have this happen.

This motion will pass. You've got huge support. It makes an enormous amount of difference. My colleague from Dufferin–Caledon said the same thing. We know

this is something we need to be able to do, so let's find a way to do it.

As I said, unfortunately, it won't go for second reading. It won't go to committee for debate. But I'd like to think what we could do is encourage the ministry that would be involved, the Ministry of the Environment, to sit down and work with the organizations to find a way so that we—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Send them a strong message.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Absolutely. Let's send them a strong message on how we can really work together, because this is in the best interest of these local communities.

Yes, it is probably a rural issue more than it is—but you know what? It's really all of our issue because everything that happens in this province is a part of who we are, and we're here to make sure that we support one another in these types of initiatives. No matter where it comes, if it's in the best interest of the folks of Ontario, then that's what we should be doing: working in that direction. So I'm pleased to be able to stand here and support all those who are in this House working towards the same goal, which is safe drinking water. I'd like to thank my colleague for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I rise today to support the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and his motion to offload these costs from the not-for-profit organizations. We do it now for the general public and the residences, and we have the capacity to extend this service to a sector that provides many benefits to our society.

I know, from my involvement in a number of organizations—especially in rural areas, where population densities make it very difficult and economically challenging to have access to the municipal water systems—that there's a huge benefit. Rural churches, fairgrounds and more are important parts of our community and provide dividends to the communities they serve. It might be the church suppers that not only go to offset costs of heating, insurance and the like, but also raise money for local hospitals, local seniors, children's services and more. We need to look at ways to encourage them and help them serve the community they reside in.

In my riding, I have the privilege of working with a few of these organizations. Saint Mary's centre in Williamstown is used for weddings and funerals; township, community and business functions; and, during the ice storm in 1998, functioned as one of the emergency community centres serving food and providing shelter for people in our area who were without power and heat in their homes for more than a month in the cold month of January. Centres like this and the ones in North Lancaster, Martintown and Green Valley also have no access to treated water, but were made available to help the community out. They're important, and they need to be kept open.

1430

I sit on the Williamstown Fair board, Canada's oldest annual fair, which just celebrated its 200th anniversary

this past August, on grounds that were donated by the famous local resident Sir John Johnson. Over 200 years, 30 directors struggled—at times with nothing more than pride and determination—to keep the major local event going, sometimes having to take out personal loans just to keep it afloat. Measures like this are appreciated by the directors and the communities that benefit as a whole from the event.

Many community groups hold successful fundraisers during the fair. Groups such as the Char-Lan minor hockey association, the Lancaster Curling Club, the Char-Lan Junior B Rebels, the Williamstown Volunteer Fire Department, the Char-Lan Figure Skating Club and more raise significant funds during this event to help keep their operating costs down and to be able to pass those savings on to the people—the children, the seniors and the residents—they support. I remember a member of the North Lancaster Volunteer Fire Department in a fundraising campaign having a very difficult time selling tickets and in danger of losing money on the event. Friends suggested he go to the fair, and he ended up selling out all the tickets in just a couple of days. These are examples of how these local rural events support the community.

Speaker, events like this and these initiatives need to be kept alive, and they need to help the communities they help keep alive. We have to look at more ways to help these not-for-profit organizations as we so dearly rely on them to make our communities strong and thriving. I don't believe that anyone in this House has not been at one of the many fundraisers for one of the local hospitals that these not-for-profits put on. They're an important part of our communities, but they are shrinking in numbers just when they're more in demand.

I have lots to say on this topic, but I want to pass it off to my colleague who wants to also talk on this. I commend the member and suggest that we need to do more to keep these very important organizations alive.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M. Shafiq Qadri: Merci, monsieur le Président. J'ai le plaisir maintenant de soutenir mon collègue l'honorable Grant Crack, député représentant la circonscription de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, et sa résolution que, de l'avis de la Chambre, des organismes à but non lucratif desservis par des puits privés ou d'autres services d'eau potable privés devraient recevoir des services d'analyse de l'eau sans frais de locaux de santé publique et de laboratoires de santé publique, de la même manière que les propriétaires ruraux reçoivent actuellement un service de contrôle de l'eau.

En Ontario, nous sommes bénis avec une source abondante d'eau douce. Elle est essentielle pour la vie et la santé, et de nos jours le jour des vies. Les Ontariens comptent sur l'eau propre et potable à la maison, dans nos lieux de culte et dans nos communautés. Nous utilisons l'eau pour l'agriculture, l'industrie et bien plus encore. Sans aucun doute, l'eau potable de l'Ontario répond à des normes strictes, et des niveaux élevés de

performance de nos réseaux d'eau potable sont en constante amélioration.

Speaker, as physician and as a parliamentarian, I wholeheartedly support my honourable colleague the member of provincial Parliament for the honourable riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. As colleagues of mine have already stated, he is following in the honourable tradition of the foregoing member, the honourable Jean-Marc Lalonde.

I think this is a very important resolution. Ontario is not a stranger to local and more widespread catastrophes, unfortunately, with regard to water quality, whether it's infections such as the E. coli outbreak that we had in Walkerton or with some of the other Indian reserves that we have across the province. I was pleased to hear a colleague from the third party mention Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, one of my colleagues at the Ontario Medical Association, who is ably steering her public health unit, particularly with regard to this particular issue.

I would say, simply, that this issue is important not only for Ontarians—but particularly having learned more about rural Ontario, I must say, as a city-born-and-bred individual, rural Ontario, in my mind at least, seems to start north of Steeles. So I congratulate my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for, shall I say, educating me and introducing me to some of the local concerns.

He has mentioned that a number of community organizations, be they faith-based or community-service-based, need to have this particular resource provided to them free of charge so they don't have to incur the added expense, which of course will interfere with their good community volunteer work, community development work that they're all engaged in.

I think this is a very appropriate resolution that my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has brought forth, and I think he has himself detected, perhaps somewhat to his surprise, that there is unanimous consent of this chamber for this particular resolution, and that only speaks to the good sense, intelligence and aptitude with which he has presented this resolution. Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to take one moment and recognize a good friend of mine, Chris Bovie, from the Whitby hospital area.

I would just say that I do recognize the work done by the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and all of us here would do everything in our power to recognize the importance of clean, safe water.

My riding is basically made up of three communities: Uxbridge, Scugog and Clarington. A good number of those smaller communities within those townships are on wells. I have been raising three issues. First of all, people who have in their home one or two rooms for a bed and breakfast often, for their own use, have their well tested rigorously. What they've asked me to say is that if the well has tested with no negative results, routinely, the

history should be considered in the necessity now that they have to have their wells tested, similar to the not-for-profit. These are small-time operators in rural Ontario. I think that the minister should look at changing the regulations so that if it has never had a negative test, they should be allowed to have them tested just as they're having their home tested, because they live there. They drink the same water; they wouldn't put anyone else in danger. I would say that's what I think.

But I also think that what has been said today—churches have been devastated by this, even though their water is proven monthly or annually as safe. Legions—and I think in my riding—fairgrounds. During this time of year, there are fairs in Uxbridge, Scugog, Blackstock and all the small communities. They go to a lot of trouble—these are not-for-profit as well.

I think looking at rural Ontario and/or northern Ontario, as has been mentioned by one of the speakers—treating them fairly; not exempting them from the rigours of testing, but look at the history of the testing and continue the testing. If there has never been any negative testing—most of them have UV lighting and all of those things, in every regard, to keep themselves safe and the people who are using their water.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity, and best wishes in your report.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: There are only about 45 seconds left on the clock, so I just want to—I read the resolution. As an urban member, I want to say that I support the resolution. Some of us in the city step out and visit various parts of Ontario, whether it be Algonquin park or other parks, and we try to decide whether or not to drink the water, whether it's drinkable or not. I think this resolution makes it clear that the water testing wouldn't be charged. I think it's a very good idea.

Several times I've gone out of the province—out of the city and to other parts of the province, I should say—and I want to make sure the water is safe, and so does my wife. I think it's a very good resolution, and I support it fully. I congratulate the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Grant Crack: I just wanted to thank a number of members here today who spoke to my private member's resolution: the members from Leeds–Grenville and Kenora–Rainy River; the member for Peterborough for his kind words; Dufferin–Caledon, Nickel Belt, Etobicoke Centre, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Etobicoke North, Scarborough Southwest and, of course, Durham.

The purpose of this motion—hopefully turning it into a resolution—was to bring awareness to some of the challenges that some of our local community groups are facing, the financial constraints that they're finding themselves in. I just wanted to indicate that the good words that I heard today, that we as parliamentarians, as

legislators, support our community of volunteers—and some of the words that were spoken today are very heartfelt for me, and I'm sure all the volunteers really appreciate the input that has been received.

1440

There was a comment concerning costs associated, by the member from Nickel Belt and I believe as well from Etobicoke Centre. Yes, there are costs associated with regard to this particular water testing, but we need to do what we can to ensure that our community groups, organizations and the facilities that they operate in continue to survive during these challenging times.

I wanted a special thank you to the member from Etobicoke Centre. When she talked about that we don't want to tap into the resources of these community groups, I thought that that was a sensational pun and I thank you very much for that.

Thank you for the support, and I look forward to the vote later on today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will take the vote on this item at the end of regular business.

FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION
AMENDMENT ACT (RETROFITTING
OF RETIREMENT HOMES WITH
AUTOMATIC SPRINKLERS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION
ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE
(MODERNISATION DES MAISONS
DE RETRAITE PAR L'INSTALLATION
D'EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES)

Mr. Paul Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to require the retrofitting of retirement homes with automatic sprinklers / Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie pour exiger la modernisation des maisons de retraite par l'installation d'extincteurs automatiques.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Paul Miller: On June 2, 2010, I tabled Bill 92, Mandating Sprinklers in All Ontario Retirement Homes Act, 2010, and began my journey to right a tragic wrong in the care of our seniors.

The bill made it to committee on October 22, 2010, but then ran into the McGuinty government's hard wall of resistance. The Premier's former House leader employed every political and administrative tactic available to her to ensure that Bill 92 was not permitted to go to the standing committee for public hearings, a disgraceful move that has set back the implementation of this essential legislation by two years.

Since that happened, three more seniors have died unnecessarily, when automatic sprinkler systems may have saved their lives. This is the legacy of that House leader.

After the October 2011 election, again, I introduced automatic sprinkler legislation with the hopes inherent with our much-needed minority government. Bill 54, the Fire Protection and Prevention Amendment Act (Retrofitting of Retirement Homes with Automatic Sprinklers), 2012, is before this Legislature today, almost 24 months since the issue first saw the light of the legislative day.

For those of you who are new to this Legislature, I'll provide some statistics. Since 1980, there have been 48 deaths of seniors due to fire and smoke inhalation. This is the worst record in North America: Extencare in 1980, 25 people; Ottawa Centre nursing home in 1989, three; Extencare Starwood nursing home in 1989, two; Meadowcroft in 1995, eight; Sunnybrook veterans' wing in 1997, three; Muskoka Heights in 2009, four; Rainbow retirement home in Timmins in 2012, one; and the latest one, Hawkesbury in 2012, two.

Additionally, five separate coroner's inquests have called for the immediate installation of automatic sprinklers in every retirement home in Ontario. How has the McGuinty Liberal government responded to these calls for senior safety? With inaction—until the tragic deaths at the Hawkesbury retirement home in this year.

I've already mentioned how the former Liberal House leader actively worked to keep the bill from the public hearings. And what finally spurred this government into action? Yet more deaths of seniors. The action taken by this government was to implement a technical consultation which, I admit, looked like another move to keep from implementing much-needed automatic sprinkler legislation. However, I do know that there are some positive measures being studied which will likely be recommended at the end of the consultation process.

All of this seems good. But, as always with the government, there's a reason to feel a little uncertainty.

First, I was somewhat surprised to find out that those participating in the technical consultation were required to sign a confidentiality agreement and they were not allowed to attend today. I find that remarkable. The effect of that: No professionals involved in the process are allowed to be in this Legislature this afternoon to support Bill 54—highly irregular, I might add. Was this a usual process, or was this yet another move by the McGuinty government to keep a public show of support for Bill 54 out of this Legislature? It certainly worries me. What is this government's real intent around legislating safety for seniors in care facilities?

The technical consultation was implemented this year and has included a large and varied number of stakeholders. I understand that it has expanded the initial parameters of the consultation and, if adopted by the government, will enhance the safety provisions of my Bill 54. Succumbing to pressure after the loss of life in the Hawkesbury fire, the government shortened the reporting time from the technical consultation to the end of Octo-

ber. That's good, but it doesn't go far enough. The technical consultation would likely recommend amendments to Bill 54, which I would happily entertain. Currently, Bill 54 does not call for regulations; however, this can easily be amended at committee to accommodate the technical consultation report. And, as it is a technical consultation, I believe that the recommendations would form any necessary regulations to the bill, and, after such intense professional study, will be ready to implement almost immediately.

However, the normal process here, Speaker, for a bill is that it goes to a standing committee. Then a sub-committee with one MPP from each party determines when the bill gets on the agenda, if there will be public hearings, how many days, when and where and how long for each presenter, and how presenters will be decided upon. Should the technical consultation issue its report at the end of October, Bill 54 could move to the standing committee agenda immediately after that. Considering that the majority of the information normally garnered through the public hearings has already been presented, studied and carefully reported through the technical consultation process, I will recommend that the public hearings and regulations process be streamlined.

Normally, public hearings are held to hear from those who have an interest in the bill. Often, these are the technical and professional experts whose advice is instrumental to ensuring that the bill is as inclusive or exclusive as appropriate and that the regulations which follow will ensure proper implementation and administration of the intent of the bill. Because all of the professional and technical experts have already provided their advice and had it enshrined in the technical consultation report, I suggest that the public hearings could require a lot less time. And because the technical consultation will effectively provide any regulations to the bill, that portion of the process can be truncated.

My goal in suggesting this expedited process is to have royal assent before the Christmas recess. Once we have royal assent, then any regulations that are deemed necessary can be drafted and in place for the effective date of January 1, 2018. This effective date allows five years for these care facilities to plan and budget for retrofitting with automatic sprinklers. To meet this target, royal assent before Christmas is essential, and what a Christmas present to all of our vulnerable Ontarians in care facilities.

But the process does cause me some concern. Once we have completed the public hearings portion, the bill comes to committee for clause-by-clause consideration. The amendments from each political party are discussed and voted on, the results of which are reported to this Legislature. Now, this is where it can get a little murky, Speaker. It's up to the government to call the bill for third reading—the acceptance of the report from the standing committee, which can be done quickly if the government is willing to do so. Then after third reading, the bill is put with other bills in the waiting-for-royal-assent group. Again, it's up to the government when it puts these bills forward for royal assent.

So our work is far from done once we get the bill to the standing committee. I'll be looking for the support of all three parties to get Bill 54 on to the standing committee agenda and to stickhandle it through all of the processes to royal assent.

When I reflect back over the many months, the many hurdles and the many setbacks for this legislation in both its Bill 92 and Bill 54 forms, I'm quite sad. We could have had a process in place to protect our seniors and other vulnerable Ontarians who find themselves in a myriad of care facilities in this province. We could have had the process in place to give greater protection to our emergency services personnel who are the first responders to fires in care facilities. We could have had this process in place to provide greater comfort to families who have had to take their older loved ones to live in these facilities.

1450

But we have failed to do so, and that's something that digs deeply into each of us who has had to say goodbye to a frail parent, who was their strength growing up, and leave them in the care of strangers; especially in an older care facility, which may not have automatic sprinklers.

We have failed the first responders who have had to grab and carry frail seniors as quickly as possible to beat the flames and smoke, often ripping their skin or breaking their brittle bones, rather than wrap them in a blanket against the chill of the sprinkler water, which would be easier, and move them gently with that bit of time provided by the automatic sprinklers.

I know this sounds somewhat melodramatic, but it was raised by the firefighters themselves, the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario that represents the part-time and volunteer firefighters. It was something that I hadn't thought about, but when you're racing against fire and smoke, speed—not gentleness—is the order of the day.

From the beginning of this process, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs has strongly advocated for this legislation, and they've been joined by many other fire safety organizations, as well as the Co-operators insurance company. In the spring of this year, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association also came on board with this legislation. Not only have these organizations supported the effort, but the results of five coroners' inquests have called for automatic sprinklers in all retirement homes.

The support is clear from the professionals who know the work, know the dangers and know the things that make it safer. That's why it's been a mystery to me that the government has stalled on this legislation. I can't believe that relatives, friends, neighbours and constituents haven't raised their concerns about these safety conditions in 4,300 retirement homes in Ontario that don't have automatic sprinklers.

We're not talking about hugely remote areas. The recent deaths have occurred in Orillia, Timmins and Hawkesbury. Although not large urban centres, these are reasonably sized municipalities. How insecure must those in care centres in villages and small towns or small rural

communities feel? How can we have left them off the radar screen for so long?

On the bright side of this story is the clear understanding that this is an important issue by the chair of the board of Revera Inc.—which has many retirement homes in Ontario—who recognized the urgency of the automatic sprinklers and guaranteed that all Revera sites would be retrofitted not by the five-year implementation period proposed, but by August of this year. Who was the board chair? Former Progressive Conservative Premier Bill Davis.

This clear forward-thinking by former Premier Davis clearly played a role in the recent Revera retirement home fire in Hanover. The fire was started by an electrical failure in a musical organ located in an apartment. Only one sprinkler head was activated, but it contained the fire to the organ and extinguished it. Four of six floors were evacuated due to smoke and water damage, with a total of 64 occupants evacuated. A number of the residents were permitted back shortly after. Police began the evacuation of residents before the firefighters arrived, and were likely relatively safe from the danger of fire because of the automatic sprinklers. Although there was about \$50,000 of smoke and water damage, there was no loss of life.

A letter in August from Jeffrey Lozon, Revera president and CEO of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, proudly reported that they have more than 90% of the retirement and long-term-care homes across Canada equipped with sprinklers, and the remainder will be completed by the end of 2012. In his letter, he attributes the installation of automatic sprinklers with the successful evacuation of the Hanover retirement home: “This experience has been a telling example for why this initiative has been so important.”

That’s the crux of it. That’s what Bill 54 is meant to do. That’s the security we all want for our vulnerable citizens. That’s the peace of mind our families want when their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles are in Ontario’s care facilities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I’d like to join the debate on Bill 54. I have to compliment the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for his assiduity in bringing this bill forward once again. I have been listening very carefully to what the member has said, and I have to agree completely: We do need it; we have to do it.

This bill has been receiving the support of all members of the House, if I may say. Early this year, it was because of his doing; he said, “I would like to see the process pick up speed and get on with it.” Therefore, we have now this technical consultation which is supposed to come due in October of this year. We hope this indeed will come to be soon.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services expressed support as well. The Minister of Labour and of seniors has spoken in the House in support of the necessity of having sprinklers in seniors’ homes as

well. As a matter of fact, Minister Jeffrey had her own sprinkler bill which was approved by this House.

I have to say, Speaker, in complimenting the member, that, complementing his own bill as well, in 2008, I introduced a similar bill myself which went through second reading in 2009.

Therefore, everything is ready to go, Speaker. We are waiting now again for the technical reports which we know more or less the House will be looking at in a positive way to move the bill ahead.

As the member said, there are some areas that we have to look at and see that the bill indeed will contain everything that is required to make it a good and perfect bill. As a matter of fact, I have to tell the member that, while the bill calls for an amendment to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, it also requires some amendment and changes to the Ontario fire code. One cannot work without the other. The technical consultation, I hope, will bring forward those recommendation so that we can take a look at them through the public input process which we hope this bill will go through and carry on, and we can have more input.

I also share the view with the member, Speaker, that we have debated these bills before. I say “bills” because this is not the first time, and this is not the only one. So I believe that we should be looking at measures to curtail the time that we’re going to spend on the bill when it comes back so that indeed we can go ahead and give peace of mind to seniors, and their family members as well.

You know, Speaker, sometimes our own legislative agenda here becomes the worst enemy of the people, if I may say that, because we are entangled in this process—not political process but legislative process—which allows members, Premiers and ministers to do certain things within a particular period of time. But there are times, Speaker, when we really have to look into the necessity of speeding up this particular process, look at ways of moving bills as important as this forward in a faster way.

To the member, I have the list myself, and I don’t want to be repetitive, of the number of fires that occurred in different homes, the number of lives that have been lost, and there were numerous. When we look at the costs of implementing the system, Speaker, versus the lives that have been lost, surely no one in this House can dispute that there is no possible comparison. For example, in one of the homes, the cost of retrofitting it after a fire was more than \$800,000; the cost to retrofit with sprinklers was about \$120,000. There is absolutely no possible correlation one to the other, Speaker.

This is one of the reasons that I believe we as a government not only have the responsibility towards the occupants, our seniors and their families, but to society in general. I have to say, Speaker, in the long run this is going to cost the government more money, so there are no real savings for us.

I believe that our Ontario fire marshal is working very seriously and expeditiously in completing the technical

report. I hope that when it comes, we can look at it in such a way that will speed up the process and move this bill forward.

Again, Speaker, I want to commend and congratulate the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for being so—

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Proactive?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Forceful, I would say, in bringing—

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Tenacious.

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Mr. Mario Sergio: Tenacious, yes, of course, and I could use other words, in bringing it again. If I were in his shoes, I would do the same and I would be asking the same of this House. So, on his behalf, on behalf of our side here and on behalf of every member, I am delighted to support it and I hope that we can put a positive end to the presentation of this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 54, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, to require retrofitting of retirement homes with automatic sprinklers.

This is a bill that, in large part, has come before this House once before, and I congratulate Mr. Miller, from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, for his persistence in bringing it back. I know it died on the order paper in a previous Parliament, so I give him credit for his stick-to-it-iveness. He has made some changes to the bill that I think make it more acceptable to those who have a retirement home that would be affected by this legislation, extending the period of time in which sprinkler systems would have to be installed. But it is still an issue for some retirement homes, and I hope that it would be part of an ongoing discussion.

I know the government is doing a technical assessment at the present time, and hopefully that will be wrapped up fairly soon. But I share the view of my colleague from York West that you cannot put a price on the loss of a life if it could have easily been prevented. This is something where I think the debate has shifted over the years. I think it has increasingly reached the point where people believe, at this time, that it is an action that should be taken in order to protect our seniors and the vulnerable. The reality is that the mobility level of more and more people who are in homes other than their own has gotten less, not more, over the years, because the ages of people in those facilities have increased as well, which makes the question of being able to safely get out on your own something that is not as certain as it would be if you were fully mobile yourself.

This is a bill that we have discussed in our party, and we're going to be supporting the bill today. We believe that, in the broad sense, it's legislation that is required. I know the Minister of Labour at one time, when she was not a minister, brought in a private member's bill that would have compelled all new homes to have sprinkler systems. So I certainly believe that if that's the case on

the other side in cabinet, the government will certainly be supporting this legislation.

I believe it's a big step in the right direction. There may be some things that need to be discussed. I think it's important that we get the standing committees in this Legislature set up so the bills that are valid and worthwhile, like Mr. Miller's, can be brought to committee so that anything that can be discussed and improved upon can be dealt with there. Thank you very much. Again, I congratulate Mr. Miller.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I enjoyed listening to my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the member from York West and, of course, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I am very pleased to stand up today and speak on the bill. Of course, I will be in favour of private member's Bill 54, sprinklers in retirement homes. I also applaud my colleague for his tenacity. We've described some of the verbs that describe our colleague. If nothing else, he is persistent and has a lot of tenacity, and in this particular case it serves him well, because he is doing the right thing to protect seniors in retirement homes.

From listening to each member of each party today, there's obviously full support on all sides of the House, so that is wonderful. But the one piece Mr. Miller brought forward is that the original time he introduced the bill in June 2010, it went to committee and there were obstacles that were put in the way that, unfortunately, turned out to be the demise of the bill, and that's why we're here again today. So, I hope, in spite of our political difference, that everyone in this House will realize that, yes, we are supporting it, but the importance of getting it to committee, having public hearings and making sure it comes back to the House, so that we can vote on this bill that's most important for seniors and protect their lives.

Of course, Speaker, there are too many seniors in our retirement homes who have lost their lives—one is one too many—due to related fires in these retirement homes, and I'm not prepared to continue that trend. I'd like to see the bill passed and brought back to the House so that we can protect the lives of seniors. It's shameful, really, that anyone has lost their life in an institution because of lack of safety adherence. At the time, that's the way standards were; that's fine. But now we're into the future, and we can do something about it. I think it's the opportunity we should take and look into that further.

Mr. Miller also brought up a point that's very valid. We are concerned about services and institutions that are available in our rural communities, and this is something that's a very key piece to that. When there's a fire in a rural facility, we know there's a volunteer service, perhaps, and they don't get out there as fast, so it's even more crucial that we make sure that our rural communities and our seniors living in those facilities are also very much protected, to prevent any further tragedies there.

It was also discussed that there were five coroners' inquests into this situation. Each one has recommended that automatic sprinkler systems be introduced into retirement homes, yet, sadly, no action has been taken. So I hope from that technical consultation that's going on right now—and I'm pleased to hear that this government has expedited it to the end of October, to have the results come forward—that once that happens, that we take into account and get working on this bill a little quicker.

From the time that Mr. Miller has introduced—originally, this bill was called Bill 92, and from that time, as he mentioned, there have been several deaths. But since 2010, there were another two fatal incidents that happened in Hawkesbury, I believe it was. Again, that really—it's almost like I can't have the words to describe how upset I would be if perhaps it was to relatives of mine that had occurred and it could have been preventable. We really need to make sure we understand the severity of it, and that when it goes to committee—this is not a bill that can sit there for years and years.

There are provisions for retirement homes to implement these sprinklers so that they can be proactive for the people they serve. When people go to retirement homes, that is their home, and if you can't feel safe in your home, that's a very sad commentary on the situation that they've been put in, out of no fault of their own as to why they're there.

This legislation is an approach that we talk about as proactive. Mr. Miller has, in a very strong way, explained that he is disappointed that this bill hasn't been passed and pushed forward in the past and made legislation. He's brought it up again, and by him doing that, I think we need to give the seniors the respect they deserve in their homes and make sure that we all co-operate with this situation and pass the bill. When it gets to committee, those are the times that amendments are to be looked at, to make sure it's a fair bill and there are the timelines that are fair for these institutions to have sprinklers.

The other piece of that is—you know, my background is insurance. I would think that when you have a building that has a lot of people in it, especially seniors with mobility issues, when there's a fire, the risk that they are exposed to is so much higher than when you'd have a sprinkler system in there, the risk is mitigated so that there isn't that type of liability that goes back to the insurance company. Perhaps when that happens—I don't know if anyone has mentioned that maybe their insurance rates will go down, because then the risk is lower in that situation if there's a fire. Commercial buildings with sprinkler systems are going to have a different rate of insurance, compared to a commercial building that doesn't have a sprinkler system.

That certainly won't offset the cost of implementing a sprinkler system, but it certainly will be a better loss ratio for an insurance company, which will then also perhaps roll back to those commercial institutions where they can have a little bit of a break.

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Speaker, I just wanted to wrap up by saying that I hope that this bill will—of course, it sounds like it's a

resounding yes today that it will be moved to committee, but the real meat and potatoes of this bill is when it gets to committee. Let's get it back to the House so it can pass, so all our loved ones, treasured seniors, parents and grandparents don't have to face this situation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Before I recognize the next Speaker, I would remind members of the House that we refer to members by their riding and not their name. The last speaker used the name of the mover four times, so I remind you again.

Further debate.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased today to join the debate on fire safety in retirement homes. I can tell you that there's a lot of current activity that is significant, and I hope that all people are very serious about this. This, of course, is Bill 54, retrofitting of retirement homes with automatic sprinklers.

Here are some of the key messages that have transpired with fire safety in recent years.

Most recently, you'll find that Ontario is really taking strong action in many areas on fire and on seniors living in retirement homes. The government is taking steps to make sure that these retirement home facilities are equipped with automatic sprinklers. Very positively, in June, the Premier met with members of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs to discuss sprinklers and other ways to ensure fire safety. In April 2012, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services announced the creation of a technical advisory committee to make recommendations on fire safety in retirement homes and other vulnerable occupancies.

I can tell you that that particular bill could cover retirement homes, could cover long-term-care homes, various other group homes for individuals with disabilities—blind, deaf, intellectual and, of course, disability itself.

The committee was asked to deliver its initial recommendations this fall, four months earlier than originally planned. These measures are in addition to those in the Retirement Homes Act, which provide stronger protections for seniors living in retirement homes and also include fire safety measures.

The Retirement Homes Act is the first legislation in Ontario's history to provide strong protection for seniors choosing to live in retirement homes. They now bring consistency across the province and could include old municipal bylaws, or portions thereof, where applicable. Further, Speaker, we've been working hard on the Retirement Homes Act for a number of other areas.

It's very important when it comes to fire that a process was implemented this year, in July, that: trains all staff in fire protection and safety; posts in the home an explanation of the measures to be taken in case of fire; provides information to residents about nighttime staffing and whether the home has sprinklers in each resident's room or not; consults with community agencies and response partners to help develop specific emergency plans—that is in place and required for January 1 this coming year.

Staff training on the emergency plan and evacuation procedures is under way, and this process must also be posted in the home.

There are a couple of other things. I won't be able to say the names, so I can't say Mr. Miller, but he did mention a number of fire proponents that were supportive. I'm pleased to give you another one: that the government has made this issue "a priority," and I'll give you the name of the person who spoke these words. That's Kevin Foster, president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, and he continued on to say that, "The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs is committed to expediting the work of the technical advisory committee to provide workable recommendations that help improve fire safety for Ontario seniors"—always very, very positive.

I'm going to do a quick wrap-up. I won't be able to say "Mr. Miller" again, but I will say that the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has worked on this project for three years, and this is his second submission. He deserves our gratitude for his persistence and passion on Bill 54. I continue to believe that sprinklers should be available in public use buildings where not already implemented or installed in Ontario.

As the parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors, I thank Mr.—I'll say that name after—the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek for his efforts. With an ever-increasing number of Ontarians becoming seniors, these sprinklers and a multitude of other senior services will be needed and required. Our seniors, over time, become more vulnerable in many areas, and we should all band together to support Bill 54. Our seniors need this protection and safety in later years.

I thank the Premier for his proactive initiative and Mr.—I'll just say "the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek" for his Bill 54. I look forward to giving my 100% support when this vote comes forward this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I am pleased to rise today and also support the member from Hamilton Creek—Hamilton East-Stoney Creek—I've got to get that right—Mr. Miller, and the Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to require the retrofitting of retirement homes with automatic sprinklers. You've heard that I think we're all pretty supportive of this bill again—can I say that?—so your tenacity in bringing this forward again is supportive, and to try to move it again to committee and hopefully back to us for third reading.

Across Ontario, there are approximately 700 retirement homes, 400 long-term-care facilities and 3,000 other homes that house vulnerable residents. There's no question that seniors, especially those living in retirement homes and assisted living facilities, are a vulnerable segment of our society. I know as my mother ages, you can see that their mobility is decreased. They just can't move as quickly. They can't think as fast. It's just the reality of life, and they are vulnerable. They have worked very hard all their lives, and they deserve the most protection that we can offer them, which is the intent of this bill that has been brought forward.

I know that people have spoken earlier about the coroner's report into the fatal 2009 fire in the Muskoka

Heights retirement home in Orillia. That report called for the retroactive installation of sprinklers in facilities such as retirement homes. This is actually the fourth coroner's inquest since 1980 relating to fire deaths in retirement homes in Ontario. Since that time, there have been 48 deaths across the province in these homes, including the tragic deaths of 25 seniors who died in a Mississauga fire in 1980. As has been said also, the support that this bill has gathered this time, as well as before: The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs want the recommendation from the Orillia inquest implemented as soon as possible. It has been echoed by the Canadian Council of Fire Chiefs and the Council of Canadian Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners.

This bill calls for the implementation date of January 1, 2018. That's a ways away, but it's enough time to give the retirement home owners and operators five years to comply with the legislation, which seems prudent and reasonable, certainly, in my mind.

Even if that were deferred, there are considerable costs, and I think we acknowledge that and we appreciate that. That's why the date has been put into the bill. There's a cost associated with the conversion. We've spoken today about the smaller homes that we have, especially in rural Ontario. When it was debated before in the Legislature, brought forward again by the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, I think the cost of initially installing a straight sprinkler system would be about \$2,000 per unit. So if you did a retirement home of 25 units, you'd face conversion costs in the area of about \$50,000, which is not an insignificant sum. This doesn't include the retrofitting that may have to occur to the hallways and stairwells.

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But the thing is, we need to get the bill to committee. I think we've heard that today. We're all unanimous. We would like the government to help us set the committees up. We've been asking—both opposition parties—for the government to set committees up so we can deal with good pieces of legislation, which I will say this is, so they can be discussed here with the stakeholders.

Let's get some reasonable time periods out there. We can look at retrofitting so there's not significant hardships on both the retirement home owners, and of course, the costs do get downloaded to the residents that are in there. So we have to be cognizant of all those concerns, that those fees don't get too out of reach and that everything is done in a reasonable manner of fees and also a reasonable time period.

Many of our small municipalities don't have full-time fire departments. Our rural municipalities have a lot of volunteer fire departments that come out. Things like retrofitting these retirement homes with sprinklers, obviously, are more critical in some of those areas and are going to buy someone their life probably at the end of the day.

I know that I have some other colleagues here that do want to speak to the bill. I don't want to belabour the point of saying: Let's get it done here today. Let's get it

to committee. Let's discuss it. Let's move it forward and actually implement it in the province of Ontario, and look forward to, hopefully, preventing further deaths.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{rs} France Gélinas: It is such a pleasure for me to speak in support of this bill from the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. He has put his heart and soul into trying to move this issue forward for all of the good reasons that he has laid out for us before.

When you talk about people living in retirement homes, Mr. Speaker, you talk about a captive audience of very vulnerable people. They are often frail. They are often quite elderly, and they certainly deserve our protection. When you hear about the fires going on, when you hear about the deaths that are happening right here in Ontario and that continue to happen, it calls for people like us, people in leadership positions, to step up to the plate and do something. This is what my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is doing today. He is doing his job as an MPP. He is stepping up to the plate and saying that this captive audience of vulnerable Ontarians needs our protection.

So he did his homework. He went out and talked to everybody that works in the field and asked them: "What do you think of putting sprinklers into retirement homes?" You've heard it from all sides of the House. The people that go to those tragedies, the people that are called to the scene when smoke is smelled or flame is seen, know that with a sprinkler, they stand a chance—they stand a chance to make sure each and every one of them gets hauled out of that building and goes on to live another day, with a heck of a story to tell as a bonus.

Without sprinklers, Mr. Speaker, it is a completely different story; it is a story of tragedy. It is the kind of story that keeps firefighters awake at night after they retire. They talk about those kinds of fires as to, why? Why is it that, in 2012, when we know we have a captive audience of vulnerable people living all under one roof and we had an opportunity to act on the bill from the member of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, we sat on our hands and did nothing?

Is there money involved? Absolutely. Sprinklers don't come cheap, and sprinklers will have to be installed in places where they are not. But there is leeway in the bill. We talked about giving them enough time. When you know that you have so many years to comply, then the next time you do renovations—because, yes, buildings have to be maintained—program it in. Do your best to try to get it done.

But at the end of the day, when the opposite gets done—that is, we sit on our hands and we say, "The \$50,000 it would have cost to put a sprinkler in is not worth the life of my grandfather"—we all feel bad about that. We all feel pretty bad, and we look back and say, "My grandfather was worth more than 50 grand. Why didn't they put the sprinklers in?" They didn't put the sprinklers in because people didn't listen to what the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek had to say.

This is an issue that's been debated in this House for way too long. I remember when the Liberal government brought forward their bill on retirement homes. It was a real shame. I've been a politician for five years, but before this, I spent 25 years in health care. Before I even became a politician, I knew that things needed to change in our retirement homes. Then they brought forward this bill that, frankly, gives retirement home owners oversight of their business.

How can we do this to those vulnerable seniors? How could we put people whose number one objective is to make money in charge of handling our seniors? We have a chance here today to step up to the plate, do what we were elected to do and support the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek's bill. I hope we all do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to stand and first pay respects to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. We should all know that in 2010, he brought forward a similar bill—that was Bill 92—with the same genuine intention to solve the problem, and today we're debating Bill 54. So I commend you for your commitment, Paul, if I may, and for the experience you related in your remarks of the human lives that have been affected, and that's why you're standing here, as has been said.

I want to compliment my colleague Laurie Scott from Kawartha Lakes–Brock. She outlined all—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): As one of the senior members of the Legislature—I've reminded everybody all day today that we refer to people in the Legislature by their ridings, not their names.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I thought you were naming me because I got the riding wrong.

I also want to pay respect to the member from Pickering, Mr. Dickson. Pardon me, what's his riding? Ajax–Pickering. He is the parliamentary assistant for seniors. I believe he asked a question of the Minister of Community Safety today and tried to sort of take ownership of the issue. I thought it was a bit of a cheap shot, technically, at the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Oh, come on, John.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it's not that. I thought it was well intended, but in the spirit of being co-operative here for the issue of public safety, that's why I bring it up. You knew it was members' day today. Don't try to steal it and sort of overshadow it, that the minister is taking action.

They've had five years to take action. They've had five years. They started to regulate retirement homes; they introduced legislation. Do you know what they did with regulating retirement homes? There's a new seniors' tax, a tax on seniors in retirement homes. There are about 7,000 retirement homes in Ontario. There's not one nickel of provincial money in those retirement homes. For seniors today, retirement homes run at about \$3,000 a month to \$7,000 or \$8,000 a month.

This is an issue of public safety. Even the fire marshal has recently said that this could save lives—even the industry itself. In my reading of the bill, it says there's no "one size fits all" for these homes. There would be tax solutions available to get them to write off part of it. Depreciate the cost of fire suppression in the homes and give them a tax credit for it. They could do it tomorrow morning. If they had the will to do it, the industry is there to work with them. The Ontario Retirement Communities Association has made it very clear that they are ready and willing. But many people have avoided the main issue: Who is going to fund it? New construction will be done. How do you deal with the retroactive inventory of stock? There's no one-size-fits-all.

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Use a tax measure. Give them a full tax writeoff over a year or two for all the expenses that would be put in place for fire prevention. I'd say, get this to committee. Let's get it right and let's get it done. This will save lives, especially the lives of very vulnerable seniors.

I commend the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. I'm confident today that this bill will pass. The next step, as you said in your remarks, is: How do you get it to committee? There are no committees formed. This place is almost dysfunctional, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Under this House leader.

Mr. John O'Toole: We need to have a House leader here who's able to get this place to function, and that's part of the message that I want to get out today. We're trying to do the right thing and they're standing in the way of getting the right thing done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I'd just like to thank all the members who spoke: York West, Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, London—Fanshawe, Ajax—Pickering, Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, Nickel Belt and Durham, especially the member from York West, who has always been an advocate of this situation. I appreciate the input that he has given over the last couple of years that I've been trying to implement this.

Also, the member from Durham has always got his opinion, and we certainly have to appreciate different views on this situation, but what I do realize is that in these types of bills that are for the benefit of the people of Ontario and our seniors, I think everybody on all sides of the House certainly wants to do the right thing to protect our loved ones, and I think they are going to do the right thing. I certainly hope the committees form soon so that these types of bills—not just mine, but other ones that do good in Ontario—certainly see the light of day and get to royal assent. That's the key, Speaker. We can do all we want in this House—we can talk; we can debate; we can do committee work—but until it gets that royal stamp—assent—it's not law in this province. We have to expedite that process on these types of bills that do good for the people of Ontario.

In everyone's hearts in here, I think they really want to do the right thing by our seniors, our aunts, our uncles and our loved ones, and when push comes to shove, I think they'll all do the right thing and this will see the light of day before this 40th Parliament ends. Certainly, we don't know when that's going to happen.

In closing, Speaker, I'd just like to thank everyone for their positive input today and their support of what I'm trying to do. I have been working on this for three years, and it's really nice when you see all the parties come together on situations like this. Thank you very much to all of you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on this item at the end of regular business.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, a select committee should be established immediately to develop a comprehensive developmental services strategy for Ontarians, and that in developing its strategy and recommendations, the committee shall focus on the following issues: the urgent need for a comprehensive developmental services strategy to address the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness, and to coordinate the delivery of developmental programs and services across many provincial ministries in addition to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, taking into consideration the following:

- the elementary and secondary school educational needs of children and youth;
- the educational and workplace needs of youth upon completion of secondary school;
- the need to provide social, recreational and inclusionary opportunities for children, youth and adults;
- the need for a range of available and affordable housing options for youth and adults;
- the respite and support needs of families;
- how government should most appropriately support these needs and provide these opportunities.

That the committee shall have the authority to conduct hearings and undertake research and generally shall have such powers and duties as are required to develop recommendations on a comprehensive developmental services strategy to address the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness; and

That the committee shall present an interim report to the House no later than April 30, 2013, and a final report no later than October 31, 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Elliott has moved private member's notice of motion number 27. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is truly an honour to rise this afternoon to speak to this motion. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge and thank the many people who have taken the time today to be here in the public and members' galleries, and the people who have provided support and are watching this debate at home.

The impetus for this resolution motion arose from several sources. The first was the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, which wrote the report several years ago. I had the real privilege of serving on that committee with other members of the Legislature who are here today. We discussed the issue of people who are dually diagnosed, and although the focus of our report at that time was on mental health and addictions, we did believe that the issue was significant and really could form the basis of its own select committee. So I certainly kept that in mind in the past two years and am pleased to have the opportunity to bring this forward today.

Secondly—and I think I'm not alone in this—as members of the Legislature, we hear, on a regular basis in our community offices, from families who are finding it increasingly difficult to support their adult children at home. We can and we must do better for these families, and it's my belief that if we do strike a select committee, we will be able to do just that.

Finally, there was a tragic event that happened in Whitby on April 29 of this year that made the need for a select committee, for me, crystal clear. A young woman named Holly Harrison—18 years old and full of life—tragically died in a house fire. Holly had both an intellectual disability and a mental illness and had been living in a group home for youth, but when she turned 18 she was no longer eligible for their services, and so she was discharged from the home. She didn't have anywhere else to go at that point, and so she started to couch-surf, as many young people in this situation do, because there were no group homes, no transitional housing and no other support services available to her.

I would like to stress, because I know that she was working with several community agencies in Whitby who tried valiantly to support her—but the fact was that there really weren't the programs and services, there wasn't funding in place for them to help Holly.

Holly shouldn't have died. Her family, who are here with us today, want to hear from us, as legislators, to know what we're going to be able to do to make sure this doesn't happen to any other families. I would like to take just a moment to introduce them. Holly's parents—Mr. Tyson Harrison is here; her stepmother, Chrissy Zevenhoven, along with their daughters, Amber Harrison and Matheha Liston, are here. I truly hope that our discussion this afternoon doesn't disappoint them and we can help provide them with some measure of comfort, knowing that Holly did not perish in vain.

Mr. Speaker, the parents of children with intellectual disabilities have formed the basis of our Community Living organizations over the years. They really operated

under the radar and didn't provide a problem or concern for government because they were true self-help organizations. And the parents volunteered with not much of an expectation—other than the fact that there would be a place for their son or daughter to live when they were no longer there and that they would have a happy life. We can't provide them with that measure of comfort anymore. Families are becoming increasingly desperate as they themselves are aging and finding it very, very hard to cope. What I've heard from people, and I'm sure other members of this House have heard the same thing, is that these parents are exhausted and they're desperate. It's a serious situation that's only getting worse as parents age.

I would like to take a moment to read just two of the emails that I've received from people who really, I think, illustrate how serious the situation is. From the first one:

"It has been obvious to many of us in the Community Living movement that the Ministry of Community and Social Services cannot alone meet the growing demands of these families and that a cross-ministry approach may be the only hope for those in dire straits.

"For example, in the last few weeks a mother was forced to leave her seriously disabled son at the doorstep of her local agency because she, a double lung recipient, could no longer look after him 24/7. Evidently, neither could the agency or the ministry."

Another one that I received from one of my constituents, Betty:

"My son is now 21 years old.... finished school ... essentially, we are putting him in daycare again, just like parents 30 years younger than us are doing for their toddlers, except our daycare is much more expensive, much more worrisome and it never, ever, stops....

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"My husband and I love our son dearly, but the simple fact is that we can't take care of him anymore, at least not to the extent that we've been doing.

"We have done a good job raising and helping him. Now we need a break. Physically. Emotionally. Financially. We need him in a ministry-run group home. He is social, he has lots of potential, and he needs supervision. This is the only feasible option.

"As you know, there are no group homes available. They're out there, but the line isn't moving.

"Please help us by making group homes more abundant. If it's not possible to create more, maybe there's something else that can be done. Maybe senior citizens in group homes could move to senior retirement homes.

"I don't have the answers—just suggestions—but I think that the idea above is one way to loosen up this jammed wait-list for exhausted parents like myself.

"We have negligible support. If it's not my husband or I watching our son, it's someone we pay.

"Our son is currently enrolled in a day program that costs \$1,000 a month to keep him occupied and social while my husband and I attend our jobs. We still have to

pay a worker \$15 an hour on top of that when we can't be there by 4 p.m.

"We have been responsible for every minute of our son's life. That's 21 years, and it will continue for the years beyond our own lives. We are drowning. Please help us. You have the power."

Although this really speaks to housing and concerns that a lot of parents have expressed, it's not just about that. It's about inclusion; it's about giving people the opportunities to become included in our society, to have options to work if they're able to, to have meaningful day programs if they're not able to, and to have social and recreational opportunities. In short, Mr. Speaker, these people deserve to have a life.

It's estimated that there are somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000 people in Ontario with an intellectual disability. Some people are confused about what that means, so just by way of illustration, I would say that includes people with Down's syndrome, autism, and mild to significant intellectual disabilities, among other things. They need support, and we as legislators need to develop a comprehensive plan to deliver it.

I would like to take the rest of my time—and I see I'm rapidly running out—to briefly review the recent history of developmental services in Ontario, why I believe we need a select committee and what I believe a select committee could accomplish.

In 2004, the government made the decision to close regional facilities that had housed people with significant intellectual disabilities for many years. That would be the Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres. That was a good idea, but we needed to put more into community services. Bill 77 in 2008, the so-called social inclusion act, was another great idea. It was meant to recognize that one size doesn't fit all, that we need to tailor individual services, and that people should have input in planning their own lives. It's not just about group homes. But what we need is a range of housing options, from group homes to supported independent living. We need to consider employment opportunities, meaningful day programs and respite for families.

The reality is that for many young people, once they turn 21—and they're eligible to stay in school until they're 21—once they finish, it's like young people drop off the edge of a cliff. What they end up doing is simply watching TV in their parents' basements, because there are no meaningful supports out there for them. I've received letters from Community Living in Peterborough, from Community Living organizations across Ontario that have really supported the need for a select committee and the need to have an overarching organization to coordinate the programs and services to break down the ministry silos. I think that's really key as we move forward to consider all of these disparate needs that need to be addressed. We know what the problem is. What I truly would like to know is what the solutions are. There are some great solutions that are happening out there in the community, but they're few and far between, they're

not connected, and we need to make sure that they're offered across the province of Ontario.

A few things I've heard about that I think are great ideas: One is to have some innovative housing solutions. The member from Elgin-Middlesex-London referred me to a project called Elmdale, which is to create an integrated living and community activity centre for disabled young adults in his community of St. Thomas. It's that kind of outside-of-the-box thinking that we could embrace in a select committee and truly follow.

We need to take a look at employment opportunities. Many people with an intellectual disability automatically are shunted onto ODSP, the Ontario disability support program, not because they want to be, but because there are no meaningful opportunities out there for them. Employers simply aren't hiring them, and they have no opportunities for post-secondary education. We need champions in business, people who will give people with an intellectual disability a chance to have a job. The right job for the right person is out there if we search for it, and we should do it not as an act of charity but because it's a good business practice.

We do have some champions out there. I would especially like to commend Lieutenant Governor Onley for his significant work in this area. I'm proud to say that we also have some champions from my own community. There is a group that has been formed by Mr. Joe Dale and Valerie and Mark Wafer from my community of Whitby called Rotary at Work. They are Rotarians who go around the province of Ontario speaking to fellow Rotarians about why they should hire people with disabilities—with an intellectual disability or a mental health disability—again because you get out more out of it than you put into it. It's a very good business practice.

I'd also like to see a select committee explore post-secondary opportunities. Some of the community colleges in Ontario have what they call CICE—community integration through co-operative education—programs that allow a student to enter a study area of their choice. It's a two-year program. They have learning facilitators who modify the program for them. When they graduate after two years, they will receive a CICE diploma and skills portfolio that will allow them to enter the workforce.

We need to explore these. This isn't something that's core funding of a community college, but I'd like to commend those colleges that have embraced it, including my own community college in my area, Durham College, and Mr. Don Lovisa, who is the president there. I think they're really thinking well ahead of their time.

Finally—and I'm really running out of time here—I would just like to say that we need to think about what kind of society we want to have. We need to look at how we value every person in our community. We should be looking at how we think of everybody, how we can truly include everybody in our community in our society and how we can celebrate their abilities and not really look to how we can accommodate people who have disabilities. This requires a real paradigm shift in our thinking, and

until we get there, we're not really going to allow everyone in our community to live lives of purpose and dignity.

For all the reasons I've talked about in starting off the discussion today, I really would urge all members of this House to support this resolution for a select committee. I think this is truly a non-partisan issue. We can do very good work together to honour Holly's family, families that are here today, families that are listening, and families across Ontario and their sons and daughters. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm sorry actually to have to stand on something like this today; that we actually have to have a select committee put in place. But I am happy to be able to stand for the people who have come to me concerning these matters that the select committee would help.

I'd also like to send our best wishes and sympathies to the family of Holly, on behalf of the NDP caucus. I'm very sorry. Things like this shouldn't have to happen. We shouldn't have to have residents—people—falling through the cracks. How is it that we have a system that, after the age of 18 or 21, depending on where they're falling into the system, they have nowhere else to turn? How is it that we have no homes for these people? These are serious concerns.

I know that in Hamilton we had a young woman who, I believe, kind of fell through the same cracks. When I was working downtown, I would see her often. Unfortunately, she fell into addictions and those kinds of things, just because she had nowhere else to turn, and there's always a nice dealer there, waiting to pick up somebody who has nowhere else to turn. They prey on the vulnerable. A couple of years ago, unfortunately, this woman was found dead in an alley at the back of a house. This is what happens because they have nowhere to go, right? So I look forward to this select committee to deal with those kinds of issues.

I know I've always been visited by people in my riding who have children who are now adults switching from special supports at home into Passport and the trouble they're running into there. Families are now expected to become an employer, hiring their own people, unless they're willing to pay a portion of the money they've been given to have that service done for them.

That's a big problem, because the funding didn't change, so the same person who was receiving, say, \$6,000 or \$8,000 a year now has to take that exact same money and figure out how to do that for themselves, or pay an agency to do it for them. At the same time, the wages increased—and don't get me wrong on that one, because the wages certainly did need to increase for people who were providing these services. Some of these workers that I had spoken to, because they've come to me also, were making \$10 or \$12 an hour. Now they're being bumped up, and thank the Almighty for that, because who can afford to survive on a wage like that?

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I just wanted to read here a letter dated June 2011. Then-Minister Madeleine Meilleur stated:

"I want to reiterate that these changes will not impact the amount of funding a person with a developmental disability is currently eligible to receive, and the level of service provided to stakeholders by the ministry will remain the same as we transition."

Speaking to families in my riding, this is not the fact. That's not what has happened. People are falling behind.

I know I have to close down here because I have other members who are really happy to speak to this bill also. I congratulate you on bringing this forward. I know that it's something that needs to be done and I look forward to being part of that discussion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. Let me first offer my congratulations to the member from Whitby—Oshawa for bringing forward what I think is another great motion. The last one she brought forward stimulated a number of us to decide to put our partisan differences aside and to work on an issue that had been ignored for far too long, and that was mental health and addictions. The outcome of that has been that I think we have had a government that has been responsive to that report because it was developed by all sides.

There is a good time to have select committees and there is a time that perhaps isn't a good time to have them. I think the choice of a select committee as a vehicle for mental health and addictions, the people that served on that committee and the attitude they brought to the table, made a big difference. If the member is envisioning that type of process again, I think she'll find support on this side of the House and I think she'll find support from the members that decide they would like to serve on the committee should it take place.

It's a very similar motion to the one that helped create the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. People praise that committee and those members that did a lot of hard work on it, not only for the report itself, but for the way they arrived at that decision. That is, we all sat down in the room and decided that this issue was bigger than our partisan differences, that we were going to be able to look at this objectively, not overly criticize each other, not point the finger—this is a very adversarial place. Sometimes things get done; sometimes they don't get done. Often we spend an awful lot of time finding out what's wrong with each other. In the select committee process, what we did is, we looked at what was right with each other. We looked at what good ideas we could bring forward and also, I think, we placed the public on a pedestal. What became the prime objective was to get the information from the public as to what was actually happening out there in the real world.

I'd like to extend, certainly, my condolences and my thanks for coming today to the Harrison family, to Holly's family. If their presence here today can help some of us gain a better appreciation of why this work

needs to be done, I think it's time very, very well spent. I know that it must be really difficult for you to be here today.

We know there's a lot more work to do. I think we have a grasp of what that work might be. Perhaps the value of a select committee is that we would be able to focus that work. One thing that I liked about the select committee—along with all sorts of other things; it was one of the best political experiences that I've had and I certainly am proud of the outcome—is the way that the government responded to it. I'm not here to brag about the government. I think we've done a very good job. I think for the most part the opposition parties have agreed with the response from the government, because they felt that they were part of it. If we can frame this in the same way, if we can take this issue and we can bring it forward in a nonpartisan way, if we can lay it before the Legislature like we did with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, I think it could lead to the sort of work that's being done right now in mental health and addictions. It could start to be done, then, in the developmental sector as well, because I think that was a really successful process. So I'm not absolutely sure a select committee is the right vehicle for this; I'm pretty sure it is. Certainly, I'd like to see the House leaders get together on this.

I would ask the House, I would ask my colleagues from all three parties, to give their support to this motion today, to allow it to continue along the process. That's what we did the last time around, and we ended up with something that I think is going to stand the test of time, and it's one of the best things that I've seen come out of this House in the nine years that I've been here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to speak in support of the motion from my colleague the member for Whitby-Oshawa.

I also want to extend my deepest condolences to the Harrison family. I thank you very much for being here and sharing in our debate, as well as the people in the gallery and also the thousands—millions—who are watching at home.

This is a debate that's being watched by many in the developmental sector in my riding of Leeds-Grenville. I can say that the overwhelming response from those in that sector in my riding, when I told them about this resolution, was, "It's about time," and I agree with them. I think it's time that we start listening to the pleas of the clients, the families and the staff who have incredible challenges trying to manage these essential services with compassion.

I believe the select committee is the best way to handle it. I think a lot of good can come out of that process. I'm glad the member for Oakville talked about the mental health and addictions select committee. I know that when people come into my constituency office and I show them the 23 recommendations that that committee had, people say, "That's the solution we're looking for." So I appreciate the work that others, including the

member from Whitby-Oshawa, did on that committee. I'm disappointed that the government hasn't moved forward on the recommendations, but I know that the road map is there, and I think we need it for the developmental services sector.

We need this committee to begin the very hard work of developing a comprehensive strategy to address the critical stresses on the agencies and families that are working, in my opinion, on an unimaginable burden. I spoke to many of the families, the agency staffers, and I hear the desperation in their voices. I met with the Legacy families from my own Brockville and District Association for Community Involvement. I listened to the fear that they have for the future. These are parents who made decisions to care for their children through to adulthood. They are now in their 70s and 80s. Their children are in their 40s and 50s. They don't know what's going to happen to them when they are no longer able to look after them. Speaker, it's heartbreaking.

I hear the same frustration when I talk to the three executive directors of my Community Living associations: Michael Humes in Brockville, Ted Shuh in North Grenville and Colleen Kelly-Jansen in Gananoque.

In closing, Speaker, I think, speaking to those three, they applaud this resolution because it's the start of a process that they've been desperately trying to get moving. I'm proud today to stand up for those families, those individuals and those workers, to give them a voice and to help voice their frustration. I'm hoping that my colleague's motion is passed and that there is some political will here in the Legislative Assembly to get on with it. Establish this committee and let's look at some solutions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to stand and to support the member from Whitby-Oshawa in this proposal, this motion for a select committee. I just want to sing her praises for a minute. She has certainly been one of the movers and shakers behind the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, but she has also been a woman that I have co-sponsored a number of bills with. She has always stood on the side of the marginalized, and this is just another example of that, and she certainly stood with them in a non-partisan way.

I want to address for a second the talk from the member from Oakville about the select committee, because I think that's a good example of how something should and could work when all parties come together. It's very much the template that this particular motion is built on.

However, the problem is, Mr. Speaker, that of the 23 recommendations from that committee—23 recommendations that took hundreds of submissions, hundreds of hours, hundreds of miles of travel and probably tens of thousands of taxpayers' dollars—unfortunately, our friends across the aisle have acted on 0.5 of them, and that was over a year ago.

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So my hope is that as we all come together—it sounds like we will—to support this recommendation, that we

actually put our shoulders behind it—and I'm appealing to the government side here—that not only do you put it into place, not only do we get the recommendations, but of course that we actually act on them. That's the critical piece that was missing from that former iteration.

I just want to go over a few stats because it's important to share with this House how bad things are. SSAH, which is Special Services at Home, a program that used to provide services to children and adults as of April 2012, now only provides services to children. Here are the waiting list statistics: 8,500 children on the wait-list versus 13,000 receiving service; currently almost 14,000 adults with developmental disabilities are receiving care under the SSAH, with 300 on the wait-list. There's been a huge upheaval—we've heard about that—due to the changes in criteria for this program.

So let's talk about Passport, a program for adults that transfers funding directly to them or their families. It currently serves 3,769 people, but there are 3,763 people on the wait-list. You would literally have to double the capacity to serve all of those people on the wait-list. We know that there are 2,700 people who have had the eligibility for developmental services confirmed, and an additional 2,500 who are currently being assessed for the services.

Residential services: Again, you see these huge wait-lists—over 10,000 people. Again, in the last six months we've seen a huge upheaval in this service. For example, if a person needing those services is over the age of 25, they're going to be transferred to a Passport program, and within this program—we've already heard—they're going to have to administer the funds themselves and become, *de facto*, their own employers.

Let's just take a quote from Community Living Ontario, which says, "Nearly 23,000 people are languishing on waiting lists. Decades of chronic underfunding of the developmental services sector is placing in peril children and adults who have an intellectual disability, their families and the agencies that support them." There's nothing to be proud about this for this government. Nothing in this file is anything to crow about. There's so much work to do and so much need.

I want to give some shout-outs in the few minutes remaining to some of the phenomenal activists in my own riding. They're not just in my own riding; they're activists for the whole province. People like Marilyn Dolmage. People like the Patersons, whom I brought down here over and over for their son Teddy, who were looking for Passport funding, and finally, finally they got a little bit of help from this government. I think they came down three or four times, asked three or four questions. Obviously we can't do this for every family; that's why we need some solutions.

I want to also share a happy story. Marianna Adams—and I'll call out her name—was born with Down's syndrome. Marianna was really a young woman raised by her family and nurtured by her community. When I was back in active ministry as a United Church minister, she was part of our church, and she was one of the solid

volunteers of our church. Because we set up a circle of support for Marianna from the community, because she got Community Living access, because her parents and all the parents in the community came together to look after her, she ended up being partnered with Andreas Prinz, who also was born with Down's syndrome, and they now live on their own. They're a happily married couple. I want to just give a shout-out to Marianna and Andreas. I see them all the time in our community. They're an example of what can happen if we actually do the right things for people. They still need some assistance; the community comes together to provide that. But that's a happy example.

I also want to give my condolences to Holly's family and to all of those more normal—unfortunately—bad, unhappy examples of people who aren't getting the services that they need, and that's the reality of care in this province.

So, absolutely, we in the New Democratic Party support this. Absolutely, we look forward to it being struck and to the recommendations, the only caveat being, please, please, let's make this different from the mental health and addictions committee in that, when the recommendations come forward, let us ask the government to actually enact them. Otherwise, not only is it a waste of taxpayers' dollars, not only is it a waste of time and travel, but it's a tragedy, because all of those who came to depute, who came to testify, who told their stories—agonizing stories, many of them—did not get the resources that they asked for at the end of the day. Let us not have the same situation with this select committee.

Do we support it? Absolutely. It's the first step of many steps. Please don't let it be the last step. Please let the stories of those born with a developmental disability be the stories of Marianna and Andreas, and not the story of Holly. That's what I think we're all asking for here.

Again, I commend the member from Whitby—Oshawa for bringing this forward, as is her wont. It's what she does. Let's not let her down either. She and our member also, of course, from Nickel Belt, who sat on that committee, who did such good work—let's not let either of them down. Finally, let's not let down those people who exist with developmental disabilities and their families, who are in the thousands across Ontario, for whom not much has been done at all in the last nine years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: First of all, I too would like to express my condolences to Holly's family. Thank you for being here. Thank you for the difference you are making for people in this sector.

I want to start off by talking about how committed the member from Whitby—Oshawa is to identifying the issues and opportunities in this sector.

Shortly after I was elected in October last year and before I was appointed as parliamentary assistant to the Minister for Children and Youth Services, she invited me to her office to meet with all the developmental services organizations in Durham. I was just so pleased that she

did that and included me in that dialogue. Then I believe we had another meeting as well earlier this summer. Just getting together, working together in a non-partisan way in Durham, was so rewarding, that we could identify those issues in Durham. Many of them, of course, extend more broadly to the province.

I just wanted to acknowledge that I know first-hand how committed she is, and that commitment actually extended even further when I coordinated a mental health summit this summer with all the MPPs in Durham, and that included members from the PC Party as well as my colleague Joe Dickson from Ajax-Pickering.

Of course, in that summit, where we brought together service providers in Durham, where we brought together different stakeholders, it was clear that the issues around developmental services were very important, that there were some gaps, that there are some opportunities there, and the member from Whitby-Oshawa was just fantastic in that. She was so supportive, and I appreciated her leadership in that.

There's definitely more work to do, and thus we have this resolution for a select committee. As my colleague from Oakville said, we're not quite sure how it will go forward. Of course, select committees are going to be discussed, decided on and negotiated with the House leaders.

Although there's more work to do, Speaker, I think it is important to acknowledge some of the gains that have been made in this sector. The good news is, we're not starting from zero. I want to just talk briefly about some of those gains that have been made in the last eight years.

The Liberal government has increased funding for developmental services every year since it came into power in 2003. That's something that we can all be proud of. We have taken steps to modernize developmental services in Ontario and made them more accessible, flexible and financially sustainable. Our government has invested more than \$575 million in new ongoing funding for developmental services since 2003. That's a 58% increase in operating funding since 2003. It translates into 2,900 more residential placements, 4,600 more people receiving the special services at home since 2003 and 3,800 adults now receiving the Passport support that other members have talked about.

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Yes, there's more work to do, but we do need to recognize that this has been an ongoing commitment of the government. Most recently, in the 2011 budget, increases went forward for both Passport and special services at home, as I mentioned. We have increased funding every year since 2003, and over 50% of our new investments since 2003 in developmental services have gone to help people in this sector.

As we did in 2011, this year's budget also provided an additional \$25 million for residential services and community-based programming for people in urgent need, such as clients with aging parents who can no longer care for their adult children at home. So I don't think we're starting from zero, but absolutely I agree

there's more work to do, and I'm very pleased to speak today in support of this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the motion of my colleague the member from Whitby-Oshawa to develop a select committee to address the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness, and to coordinate those services.

I think that, as she has rightly said, there is a desperate need out there to address these services. We do have to do a much better job. I want to thank Holly's family for coming here today also. It is quite an act of bravery to deal with these issues and to try to make things better for other people who do encounter really the dysfunctionality that exists out there with developmental services. I know that the service providers—in all our ridings, we've heard stories. I certainly have some valiant people within my riding who do their best to coordinate the services for these vulnerable people.

I know that when I talked to Community Living Kawartha Lakes today, before we spoke, executive director Teresa Jordan talked with our staff, and I want to thank her for that. That serves the Northumberland, Haliburton, Lindsay and Peterborough areas. They stated a statistic that is quite shocking to me, that there are approximately 25 individuals who live in long-term-care facilities with their parents because of the shortage of homes in our area, and they, as one of my colleagues said, are the lucky ones, that they actually have a connection to someone. Unfortunately, they do have to go into a long-term-care centre, which is not the best facility for them, but those are the choices that are out there right now.

The predominant issue certainly is a lot of older parents, 70s, 80s, who have adult children at home that they've looked after all their lives, and they have no alternative places for them to go, no appropriate places. We have to do better than that as a society.

I know that Community Living Durham North, too, which also serves my riding, the front thing on their website was that the member from Whitby-Oshawa has a motion today and to please go and support. So I know that we share Durham, as many other colleagues in the Legislature do. Certainly they're supportive of this initiative that's moved forward.

I know there are other service providers. I know that Kawartha Participation Projects do their best to provide self-directed support, complex care and affordable housing for people with diverse needs so they can live independently a little bit longer, and some supports that are out there.

There are a lot of statistics that you've heard today. There's no question that's true. We're all living it in our ridings, the thousands of people waiting for just the Passport program alone. So if there is a select committee that we can co-ordinate all parties to further this help for

these people, I am certainly 100% supportive. Thank you for the time, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm also happy to support this resolution. I was on that Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

I guess I'd like to talk very briefly about the value and the difference between a select committee and a standing committee. Standing committees, which we normally would have set up in this chamber, have very limited scope in what they can review and what they can discuss, limited to specific pieces of legislations, specific ministries.

The beauty of a standing committee is that it can cover so many different ministries, and if anything, what this resolution does is it reinforces just how many ministries need to be part of the discussion: education; post-secondary education; economic development, with the jobs side of it; housing; health; community and social services.

If a select committee was able to delve into the issues raised by the motion, then you actually start looking at the individual as a whole and not try to hived them off by different ministries and solve it ministry by ministry—because if we learned anything from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, it's that you don't successfully assist an individual if you try to do it that way.

I'm pleased to support the resolution. We could all spend a lot of time talking about individual families within our communities that we have tried to help and have been blocked by waiting lists and by no availability. The scope of the motion is absolutely detailed, but there's also a parameter where it talks about timelines that will motivate anyone who is lucky enough to participate in that committee move.

I hope that what we would see is something that happened very quickly with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and that was that the focus very quickly became the families, the individuals; we weren't talking about, "Well, we can't do that because the ministries don't do that"—or individual sectors. We very quickly realized that if we wanted to hear from the experts, then we needed to talk to the families and talk to the individuals impacted. I think that the way that the member from Whitby-Oshawa, our deputy leader, has written this motion, the same thing could happen very successfully with this motion if it's passed. I'm pleased to support it, and it sounds like other members of the Legislature feel the same.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the motion by the member from Whitby-Oshawa on a select committee on developmental services.

Speaker, as you know, because you were one of the members who served on the Select Committee on Mental

Health and Addictions—I, too, was honoured to serve with the member from Whitby-Oshawa on that select committee. What was interesting about the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, as my colleague from Halton has mentioned, is how everybody came together. There was a conscious decision to set aside politics even though there were members from all three parties. There was a conscious decision that the purpose of the committee was not to assign blame for problems that we all knew needed to be addressed, and that our common focus was a common goal and that our common goal—as you know, Speaker, because you were there—was to find solutions.

It was very rewarding, because we heard from people all over the province about what the issues were, how we might address them, and we did ultimately come to a consensus report. Because of the goodwill that went into the formation of that report, because of the careful thought, because we were able to honestly and frankly talk about what was wrong and how we could fix it, I think that report has had a lot of traction. It has had a lot of traction in the mental health community. I know that there are all sorts of ways in which it has impacted government policy. In fact, those initiatives are still moving forward. I recently spoke with a stakeholder group that looks at children's mental health on how that is still influencing policy which is moving forward. My concern, and I'll be quite honest, is: Can we re-create that in this minority atmosphere, where this House has become so poisonous and the atmosphere is so poisonous? I hope that it is possible to recreate that atmosphere, because it will only work if it is a consensus-driven, co-operative atmosphere.

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What did we learn? Like Holly's family—and thank you so much for being here—one of the things that we heard about at the select committee that I think still needs more focus was the gaps in services for people who have dual diagnoses, that you go to the mental health side of the system and the mental health side says, "We don't know how to handle people with a developmental delay," and you go to the developmental services sector and they say, "Well, we don't know what to do with mental health issues. We just do developmental services." If you've got a dual diagnosis, there's a huge gap. We need to focus on that, because I truly believe that that's a place that needs a lot more attention.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for—

Mr. Toby Barrett: Haldimand-Norfolk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. Further to this resolution, there is concern out there that this current government is putting people at risk of social exclusion. Essentially, the Ministry of Community and Social Services has created a crisis for young adults with developmental disabilities. I reference a report by the Special Services at Home/Passport Coalition, where families

were devastated to learn that as of April 1, 2012, adults with developmental disabilities were no longer qualified for SSAH, special services at home, once they turned age 18. Many of these same families worked very hard in 1990 to ensure that the government expanded this program to fit their needs. Now they see this hard work going down the drain.

The ministry tells people that funding is available for adults with developmental disabilities through Passport. Families have found this to be a falsehood, as the funding is totally unavailable to many. And to those where it is available, it's not nearly enough and does not cover all the kinds of supports required.

Over the past several years, we've seen what I consider chronic underfunding of developmental services. Supports in place have failed to better the lives of these people. What we've failed to recognize at times is that those with disabilities are not given rights or recourse to challenge the supports and services they are eligible for or those that they do receive. It's been discussed in this House. We can keep people in their homes, whether they're seniors or people with developmental disabilities. It's best for them; it's best for their families. It's best for the government if we financially assist families. We provide the necessary supports. We keep those with developmental disabilities out of government-run programs, which we know can at times be very inefficient and costly.

Speaker, there is a lot of work to be done for a select committee, and I fully support the resolution before the House today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will use the few seconds that are afforded to me to give my support to the member from Whitby-Oshawa's motion for a select committee on developmental services. She had come to me to talk about her motion, and this is certainly something that I wholeheartedly supported. So here again, I want to publicly say I support her motion; the NDP caucus will be giving its support to this motion, and we will try really hard to make sure that this select committee actually sees the light of day and that we can bring forward recommendations that will make the lives of people easier.

Sorry for your loss.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Whitby-Oshawa, you have two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would like to end by thanking a number of people—first of all, the members who have participated in the discussion this afternoon: I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton Mountain, Oakville, Leeds-Grenville, Parkdale-High Park, Pickering-Scarborough East, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Dufferin-Caledon, Guelph, Haldimand-Norfolk and Nickel Belt. I'm truly grateful for all of your comments and reasonably optimistic, given the tone that the debate has taken this afternoon.

The concern that has been expressed with respect to whether a select committee can function in a non-partisan manner in a minority government is a valid concern. But to that I would say that I think this is truly a non-partisan issue, and I think there are members here who are committed to helping the families that truly need our help. To the people out there who are watching and to the people who are here listening today: That's what you've elected us to do. You want us to work together; you want us to find real solutions to real problems. I think there's enough goodwill in this House that we will be able to achieve that.

I'd also like to thank the people in the galleries who have attended here today. I'd especially like to thank Holly's family for being here today, for your commitment to all that you've gone through so recently to make sure this doesn't happen to another family.

With that, I'd just like to say thank you to everyone for participating in this debate today. I really think that, with all of us working together, we can really find some solutions to make sure this doesn't happen to another young person and that we will really come up with a report we can be proud of and that will serve its purpose and really help families that truly need our help. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

WATER TESTING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 58, standing in the name of Mr. Crack.

Mr. Crack has moved private member's notice of motion number 28. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION AMENDMENT ACT (RETROFITTING OF RETIREMENT HOMES WITH AUTOMATIC SPRINKLERS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE (MODERNISATION DES MAISONS DE RETRAITE PAR L'INSTALLATION D'EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 54. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the member would like the bill—

Mr. Paul Miller: Sent to the justice committee. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): — referred to the justice committee.

Agreed? Agreed.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Whenever it happens.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Elliott has moved private member's notice of motion number 27. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 10, 2012, on the motion for second reading of Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / *Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. While the House is getting itself back in order to proceed with debate, I just want to take a minute to point out that my daughter Erika is here in the gallery. She's just back from eight months in New Zealand and teaching in Indonesia. Welcome.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm honoured to speak, on behalf of the residents of Davenport, to Bill 50, the Ambulance Amendment Act.

I want to quickly summarize some of the proposals within Bill 50. This bill allows cabinet to appoint representatives to the board of designated air ambulance service providers. It also allows cabinet to appoint a supervisor or a special investigator, as can now be done in hospitals. It allows the minister to issue directives to

air ambulance providers. It allows for amendment of the accountability agreement at any point without consultation with the service provider; that's something that did not occur before. Finally, it offers some protection to whistle-blowers within air ambulance providers.

These are not bad proposals, but these proposals do not exist in a vacuum. We must consider the history behind this bill and how we got here in the first place, to determine whether it really addresses the problems at hand. The reality is that the government had similar tools available to it in the previous performance agreement with Ornge, and the fact is, as we all know, that these tools were not used.

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The reality is that members of the government did in fact have an idea of the waste, the mismanagement, the gross misuse of Ontario's tax dollars, and this government did nothing about it. Members of the opposition and our previous leader, Mr. Howard Hampton, raised concerns about Ornge, asked about Dr. Mazza's salary, filed freedom-of-information requests years before this scandal broke and were stonewalled by this government. Again, this government did nothing.

It took the Auditor General releasing his report on Ornge for the Minister of Health to introduce this bill. Coincidentally, it was introduced on the very same day. Even then, this bill, while offering a few tools for oversight, is dependent upon a government that actually cares to investigate, to make use of the tools available to them to look at their ministries, their services and their agencies critically. Given the history behind Ornge and the reality that the government turned a blind eye to what was happening there, how do members across the aisle expect the NDP and the opposition to trust that that oversight will be achieved with Bill 50?

Bill 50 does not go far enough. I've heard members across the aisle talk about how this legislation was prepared by a senior lawyer from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care who had nothing to do with Ornge. That's good. I'm not a lawyer, though, but I do know that putting all of your eggs in one basket is not the way to achieve proper oversight. Trusting the government alone, and I should say trusting this government alone in particular, to monitor organizations like Ornge when they've failed to do so is not proper oversight. It's not a solution that reflects the reality of the problems that we are facing. It's not a solution that will address and prevent the problems that Ontarians have had to pay for in this case, sometimes with their lives.

The solutions that the government is offering in Bill 50, while not innately bad, have in many ways already been tried. We trusted the government to make use of oversight tools, the oversight tools that were available to them, and we were let down, all of us. We need to do this better. We need the government to do this better. We need to prevent this type of situation from occurring again. We need to ensure that proper mechanisms and tools are available to the public, opposition and stakeholders to help prevent this type of scandal from occur-

ring again, whether within Ornge or within another government service.

There are significant ways we can increase accountability and oversight. We can achieve better oversight by allowing parties to access information about Ornge through freedom-of-information requests. That way, we'll not be limited by the will of the government of the time in terms of what information is disclosed and what questions are asked. I think that organizations that know that they are subject to FOIs behave more responsibly and transparently. Then, hopefully, we can avoid another situation where a minister can beg ignorance over the million-dollar salaries being paid out to one of their agencies.

We can achieve better oversight by enabling the Legislature to call Ornge to government agencies. The ability to call an agency to a committee of the Legislature is one of the only tools the public and opposition parties have to hold the government to account. By calling them to government agencies, to that committee, we can ask the tough questions, peel back the layers and get at the truth.

We can achieve proper oversight by involving the Ombudsman. As an independent third party, the Ombudsman provides oversight that is an essential element for responsive and democratic public services. In Ontario, we need somewhere to turn where something goes wrong. This should be a third party whose key interest is the well-being of Ontarians, not covering up for errors under their watch.

The fact that this government has been unwilling to grant this oversight really raises questions about how seriously they take this disaster and how invested they are in preventing a future one. Unfortunately, Bill 50 does not include these measures of oversight. This is something our party will be taking up in committee.

While I was preparing my notes for today, I could not help but think about the budget bill, Bill 55. As we learn more about Ornge, we hear not only about the mismanagement, but about the deliberate fleecing of Ontarians, the deliberate ways in which members of Ornge set up a complex web of corporate schemes to benefit themselves and to make millions of dollars off of a government service intended to assist Ontarians in times of emergency.

I cannot help but remember that this same government snuck into the budget bill the power to privatize all government services where they deemed fit, and that the government is still actively seeking an opportunity to privatize services and programs. Even just today, there were announcements of privatization plans within our transit system.

Yet when an absolute disaster, a tragedy, results from privatization and for-profit schemes, this is how the government responds. The government still refuses to take any responsibility. They hide the truth. They refuse to allow a committee to be established even though it was the will of the Legislature, something the Minister of Health promised to respect. They present half-baked

legislation like Bill 50, and they boldly claim that it is enough. Speaker, we all know that it's not enough and that the changes that must occur, in all honesty, go far deeper than this bill.

There are a number of government bills before the Legislature where one of the key problems with the bill is the question of accountability and oversight. This concerns me, it concerns my friends here and it concerns all Ontarians. I hope that the government is ready to put in hard work to swallow their egos and listen to the members of the NDP and the opposition in committee because, evidently, they need some assistance in establishing effective mechanisms of accountability and oversight. We will gladly provide that assistance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Simcoe West.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the waiving of notice for Mr. Klees's ballot item for private members' public business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there consent to waive notice for the movement of the motion? Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I move that notice be waived for ballot item number 61.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will revert to the rotation in questions and comments again. I recognize the member for Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the remarks on Bill 50 by the member from Davenport.

I'm sometimes quite amazed when I sit in the House about how little of the testimony that we've heard at public accounts on Ornge actually seems to have been really heard. The member went on about how everybody should have known what Mazza was making and why didn't we reveal that, because the then leader of the third party had an FOI.

What we've heard at the public accounts committee, Speaker, is that not even the chair of the board of Ornge knew what Mazza was making. In fact, between the time he appeared to us the first time and said the compensation was all in order and the time he appeared the second

time, he had actually changed his story. He had discovered in the meantime, between his first and second appearance, that in fact there was compensation he didn't even know about as the chairman of the board. So this whole sort of fiction that "Oh well, the minister should have known" is just that. If the chair of the board can't even keep track of where the CEO's salary and other compensation is coming from, there's a problem.

We admit there's a problem. That's what this legislation is about. In my view, one of the most important things is that the minister will now have the authority to send in a supervisor to Ornge and to take over and to find out what's really going on and to make sure that it's properly managed. That's what Bill 50 does.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I respect the member from Davenport raising the issue.

If you look at the preamble of the bill, a section there says, "Protection is provided" in Bill 50 "for whistle-blowers with regard to designated air ambulance service providers." The real story is that the minister actually said—article 1, the minister assures that no whistle-blower would be fired for testifying about Ornge, February 22. The real story here is, saying one thing and doing another. This is why no one has trust anymore for the minister and for anything to do with Ornge, and I'm not surprised

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Here's an August 5 article from the Star. It's by Kevin Donovan and Tanya Talaga. It says, "Ornge Investigation: Whistle-blower Suspended After Testifying at Probe." It goes on to say, "Veteran helicopter pilot Bruce Wade was suspended with pay Thursday along with another unnamed Ornge employee. Both work out of the Thunder Bay regional centre."

There are employees at many levels within the organization who agree with our suspicions. In fact, it was questioned here by Mr. Klees for months on end, and yet the minister sits there smugly, almost laughing at the rest of us for trying to get to the bottom of another Liberal scandal.

Today, getting off topic a bit, we questioned the Minister of Energy on the matter of privilege, and that minister was almost smiling in a very cynical way, kind of like a lawyer looking at the judge, giving him the eye in terms of—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. In fact this is the same issue on Bill 50.

I wouldn't trust a thing they said. That's the real truth here. It's about trust. That's what Premier McGuinty has lost: the trust of the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add to the comments of my colleague from Davenport, who quite succinctly demonstrated the need for us to have the proper oversight, the need that was lacking, ultimately, from the

inception of the Ornge air ambulance program, a program that was designed by those movers and shakers in the Liberal Party who had connections and developed them quite profitably in the delivery of the service. We know that individuals made out handsomely through the delivery of the helicopter service. We know that patient care was compromised. We know that we had to dig. We know that the OPP has had to investigate. We know that monies were lost—\$25 million—completely vaporized. Add that to the \$190 million for the Mississauga gas plant, and we're getting up and up in the numbers, money that is just absolutely vaporized by this government without any tangible results in the end. It is one of the reasons that I believe the government needs to be changed ultimately. That's why I'm here: to ensure that we put competent people in place, and competency.

Certainly, I am happy to play a role in highlighting some of the issues that Ontarians are concerned about, which are, of course, the proper use of their money, the proper delivery of our vital health care services, and the accountability that has been missing within this government. So I'm pleased to join the debate.

I hope that the government takes our recommendations seriously when it comes to giving oversight and whistle-blower protection some credence in this bill, because it certainly is not built into it. We will have to force that upon them, and I'm happy to do so.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I just wanted to start off by responding to some of what we heard.

Lynne Golding was the solicitor for Ornge from 2000 on, and she was there till 2009, and so we have to look at the facts that came out for that.

I'd like to say who drafted the new agreement and who drafted Bill 50. It was Carole McKeogh. She was deputy director, legal services branch, a most senior person in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. She came to committee, and we asked her questions. I'll just read from Hansard: "I've been a deputy director with the legal services branch of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. I became involved in providing legal services for the ministry in connection with Ornge in January 2012. At that time, I was asked to prepare an amended performance agreement between the ministry and Ornge. This amended agreement was signed by both parties on March 19, 2012. I was also involved in the development of the proposed amendments to the Ambulance Act"—which we're talking about now.

This is the senior solicitor for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, deputy director with the legal services branch: "In my view, the amended performance agreement and the proposed legislation, if passed, provide a strong and effective response to address the concerns identified in the Auditor General's report on Ornge. I would like to speak to you briefly about these two initiatives."

This was a senior person who was brought in—it was partially because of her seniority but partially because of

the workload, she said—to draft the new performance agreement and to draft Bill 50. It will take some time to go through a lot of what she said, but in Hansard here, and I'll read from it later, she has said definitively that this new performance agreement and Bill 50, the new legislation, will provide the oversight that Ornge is working toward.

That's what we want to do in this House: Get that bill passed so that we can go on with making Ornge more transparent and more responsible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Davenport, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you to the members from Guelph, Durham, Essex and Ottawa—Orléans.

Speaker, it's clear that this government would desperately like to change the channel. It's also clear that the people of Ontario have lost faith in this government. They simply don't trust them, and it's clear they shouldn't be trusted. This government refuses to listen. It continues down the path of privatization and then acts surprised when their private friends take the money and run. We know that we have to change the channel in a real way.

As my brother here from Essex said, we need to change the government. We're tired of this government making deals with their friends and insiders. We're tired of the lack of transparency, whether that's in the environment file, where the Environmental Commissioner continues to give scathing reports about the way the Environmental Bill of Rights is being denied. We're tired of the government withholding documents. We've got to make it clear: It's not this Liberal government that's important; it's about the people of Ontario.

When I hear members on the other side try to downplay this or distract from this issue, I think about the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been flushed down the drain, and how badly we need that money for people in my riding and in ridings across Ontario. There are people who need hospital beds. There are people who need their schools repaired. They need programs in their schools. They need child care. They need welfare. They need a jobs strategy. Instead, we have a government that is absolutely disrespectful with the hard-earned money that taxpayers in this province pay every day.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I rise today to voice my concerns regarding the government's Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. This Liberal government has put forth this bill as a knee-jerk and self-serving reaction to divert attention from their leading role in the Ornge air ambulance scandal.

If you have been following the Ornge scandal at the public accounts committee of the Legislature, I'm sure you'll agree that the Liberals' serious incompetence in this file is outstanding. It is alarming that this government has potentially left Ontarians at risk because an air

ambulance may take too long or may not come at all. I look forward to the results of the coroner's inquiry regarding the deaths that occurred during Ornge's operation since 2006.

Ornge was a start-up company with no aircraft, although it was tasked with the operation of Ontario's air ambulance service. They had little more than a hope and a dream to set up this not-for-profit firm. The former CEO, Dr. Chris Mazza, drew a paycheque of \$1.4 million that was not disclosed on the sunshine list. Other Ornge executives received paycheques that should have been disclosed as well. Not only were the paycheques exorbitant, but they were kept secret.

Ornge set up for-profit entities to circumvent the rules of salary disclosure as well as leverage public dollars for private benefit. Only 3% of the profits came back to the public purse. These for-profit companies were started in order to sell Ornge's business model for air ambulance service to the world. No one asked Ornge to do this. No one asked Ornge to go worldwide at all, particularly before they had mastered the provision of air ambulance service here in Ontario.

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Since January 2006, Ornge was paid over \$730 million by the province of Ontario. In return, we have a mediocre air ambulance service that may still be proven to have put lives at risk. We have several former employees of Ornge with graduate degrees from university paid for by the province. We have a former CEO that had the company pay for the mortgage on his house. We have questionable business deals and possible kickback payments. Last but not least, we have a fleet of Ornge-designed helicopters that were supposed to be dependable workhorses but that don't even allow medical technicians to perform CPR on patients being transported or to use the same intravenous tubing that hospitals use.

In response to question after question in this House and at committee, they duck, dive and dodge the simple fact that they are at fault in this failed scheme. This government allowed this operation to be organized this way. The Minister of Health did not need the special powers that would be given by Bill 50; the minister has had the power to intervene in Ornge all along. This minister's lack of judgment told her not to act to protect Ontarians. Nothing in Bill 50 reverses that fact, nothing in Bill 50 brings the culpable to justice, and nothing in this Bill 50 prevents another scandal.

This government, through its minister, abdicated its responsibility and let Ornge play around with taxpayer money like it was water. This government allowed patient care to be trumped by personal profit and grandiose schemes. This government still does not accept responsibility for this awful mess.

This Liberal government does not value oversight and accountability. It is plagued by its own managerial shortcomings because it skims over the details of a business deal, trusting lawyers to close loopholes. They shrug off accountability as disruptive to their agenda. They shirk their responsibility to provide oversight because

they've got better things to do—I guess other things like growing the size and cost of government, as they have been doing.

This government fails to protect the taxpayer. It started as soon as they took office in 2003. In their first budget, this government brought in the biggest single tax hike in Ontario's history, the \$600 health care premium or health care tax. On its surface, this egregious tax grab was to fund Ontario's growing health care costs. Instead, it was wasted. Wasted on what? Well, the first thing our hard-earned tax money was flung towards was eHealth. This was the government's first billion-dollar boondoggle. EHealth relied on consultants, many of whom were Liberal insiders picked fresh from government. These consultants were allowed to let questionable contracts because this government didn't put in proper controls. Paid for with public dollars, the majority of these contracts were piecemeal, filled with ad hoc change orders, and didn't deliver what was promised.

Recently, I brought this up with the former head of the Ontario Medical Association, and he confirmed that we are nowhere close to a usable system of electronic health records. Years and years after McGuinty and his Liberals took us down this path, the job is still not done. Today, eHealth has 700 employees, billions of dollars wasted.

Unfortunately, the Ornge scandal is not over. The public accounts committee has not finished its work. The committee must come forward with its recommendations. Only then will the public be reassured that the bleeding has stopped. Only then will we have confidence in the administration of our air ambulance service.

Bill 50 does not solve the problems found with Ornge. As we know, the minister had the power all along to intervene, to ask questions, to change the direction of this agency. Without a vigilant and capable health minister, Ornge could happen again. Without a minister who is willing to step in and make things right before things spiral out of control, Ornge could happen again.

The main reason we know about the problems at Ornge is that employees of the beleaguered agency came forward with their information. These are the whistle-blowers we admire for their courage and dedication to good government service, although many people did not come forward because they were afraid of losing their job. Proper whistle-blower protection was not there to remove their apprehension. We need to protect employees who come forward. We need real whistle-blower protection. Bill 50 does not provide across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers.

As an example of this government's contempt, this bill imposes limits on which individuals are protected and who these individuals can approach with information. If this government was serious about protecting whistle-blowers, this bill would provide a formal process through the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman would reassure any individual that their confidentiality is secure and their concerns will be properly investigated. Given that Bill 50 does not provide any new powers to the minister and Bill 50 does not adequately protect whistle-

blowers, Bill 50 amounts to little more than a smoke-screen for this government. It gives the appearance of a strong response to the Ornge scandal. In truth, the strong response was required from this government years ago when the problems were beginning to rear their head. In fact, these problems could have been prevented from the start by an ironclad performance agreement with this agency.

This health minister and this government cannot run from their mistakes. Bill 50 is not worth our vote. I cannot support this government's weak attempt at accountability and oversight. This bill will not put us on the right path. We all need to vote this bill down.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just to add my comments to what we've already heard, I wanted to read into the record some of what Liberals have said about the scandal at Ornge when they were called to testify.

George Smitherman, for example, who is a contender for the leadership of the Liberal Party, I gather, but who was a health minister, said that "the ministry bears a lot of responsibility." He also said, "I cannot imagine a circumstance where I would have tolerated a situation where Dr. Mazza ended up making \$1.4 million." So he certainly felt that the Ministry of Health had responsibility. He said, "The real question I have is, at what point did they decide that they were dealing with what I described as a rogue entity, and what steps did they take at that time to bring it to heel?" We in the New Democratic Party couldn't say it better.

Mr. Apps, a lawyer for the Liberal Party, I gather, who was intimately involved in the scandal at Ornge, said that "the government was thoroughly, painstakingly and, in all cases, truthfully briefed in advance of Ornge taking any of these actions." I mean, I can't imagine more damning evidence than that. This is from their own party. This is not from opposition members. This was in sworn testimony before the committee.

We're talking about \$200 million that was spent with no recompense, \$25 million—bang—out the window, and nobody knows where it went, and again, all under the presumed oversight of a ministry that clearly was in breach of their responsibilities. Don't take my word for it, Mr. Speaker or those listening. Take the Liberal Party's word for it: their lawyer, their former Minister of Health. Listen to them. We hope that the current Minister of Health does.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I listened really carefully to the members opposite. What we have before us is a well-thought-out bill. In a large government, every government has things in the governance scale that go askew. There is no government in the history of Ontario that hasn't had major problems, from Walkerton to a certain health minister in the NDP government who had to resign in this place.

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The measure of a government is, do you take responsibility for fixing it? The Auditor General was brought in. The police were brought in. The Auditor General has reported on a thoughtful set of measures to correct this. The opposition parties have played politics with this, who have had one of the longest periods of endless, unrelenting, repeated committees that have produced nothing but talk. So you can't support the Auditor General and the government's position. After endless committee meetings, you seem to be clueless. You haven't come up with a single alternative amendment, proposal or solution. Every third party who's looked at this said that these reforms are correct and necessary to correct it—not just for Ornge, but they set a new standard.

There's one party in this House that's actually recognized that this was ill-conceived and problematic and has corrected it. Where are you? Where are your solutions? Why has this committee been all about talk, no accountability, no resolution? This sounds a lot like the way you guys ran things when you were on this side of the House: not taking responsibility.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I think if anyone's been clueless throughout this whole process, it's been the government. Admittedly, there have been major problems. Even if I go back to the time when we were in government, our current House leader, who was Minister of Health, when there were some issues facing him as Minister of Health, stepped down until the issue was resolved—I think an admirable thing to do. He took his seat back in his ministry when it was found that there was no problem. I think it would have been incumbent upon the current minister to do the exact same thing.

We see the creation of layers of bureaucracy from this government to create smokescreens for their problems. We saw it with the LHINs and the CCACs. They even used school boards at times as smokescreens to try to blur their responsibility and accountability for actions they take or don't take—even worse.

The absence of any whistle blower protection in this bill is, in and of itself, a giant miss. How do you miss this? In my own riding in Barrie, I know of an employee of Ornge who wants to come forward. He won't come forward because he knows his job is in jeopardy. We've already seen at least one person lose their job over their exposure of what's happening at Ornge. How can you have a major piece of legislation like this, that's supposed to fix a problem at Ornge, that doesn't do anything to protect the very people who can bring forward the information that we need to know to find out what really is wrong at the core of this Ornge?

It's window dressing. If the stores in the city of Barrie downtown had this much window dressing in those empty shops, we'd be laughing. Let's talk about actually doing what's right and clearing up this problem. This bill clearly doesn't do it. We need to get to the core of this issue and deal with the real problems, not just put

window dressing on them, as this government continues to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I've said it before; I will say it again, because I think it is incredibly poignant: It's not about taking responsibility for fixing the problem, as this bill attempts to do. It is about taking responsibility for creating the problem in the first place.

We have some fundamental, ideologically opposed positions on whether Ornge should have been created in the first place. It is an exercise in privatization, one that this government has embarked upon for every major policy initiative that we've seen—that I've seen in the nearly one year that I've been here. They want to outsource and privatize the ONTC. I'm fearful that they may want to outsource our teachers in this province and turn to a chartered school type of system because it seems like they're on the radar, they're in the crosshairs. It is a full frontal attack on the public institutions of this province. They can't figure out a way to manage some of the most vital operations. They want to privatize casino gambling in the province, let Donald Trump come in and broker deals with the horse racing associations. I'll tell you, Donald Trump isn't going to do that. He's going to take all the money, all the profit he can, because he's a capitalist. When you deal with capitalists, that's what their goal is: to gain as much capital as possible. Donald Trump isn't going to give you a good deal, and neither did Chris Mazza. Now you're finding that out today, and you're trying to put Band-Aids on it without any more accountability, without whistle-blower protection. I don't think Donald Trump would want whistle-blower protection built into any agreements either.

I'm fearful that this government goes on any longer than it absolutely has to to deliver these vital services.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I believe it's incumbent upon the government to have a quorum in this House. I don't think we have a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is here, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I understand a quorum is present.

The member Carleton-Mississippi Mills, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to thank the different members for their comments: the member from Parkdale-High Park, the member from Toronto Centre, the member from Barrie and the member from Essex.

The problems with Ornge that are not solved by Bill 50 are the complete lack of oversight and accountability. The oversight and accountability should have been and could have been provided by the government, by the Minister of Health. She had all the power and she had all the authority to do that, and Bill 50 is absolutely unneces-

sary. It is window dressing, as my colleague has mentioned, to try to cover up the real problem.

This lack of oversight and accountability has resulted in the waste of millions of dollars. We've had terrible service. There have been people's lives put at risk because of poor air ambulance service.

We wasted an awful pile of time in this Legislature discussing a problem that could have been solved by proper oversight and accountability that could have been in place and should have been in place—was in place—and the minister failed to act long ago. This House could have much better spent its time talking about constructive things like how to run this province better, rein in our spending and do a good job of government.

Whistle-blower protection would have helped. This bill does a little bit of that, but it's not good enough.

The problem of Ornge is a common one with this government. We've seen the same thing with eHealth. We've seen it with Presto cards. That will only change when we adopt a philosophy of good government oversight and good government accountability.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's amazing to me, Speaker, that the government that brought in this legislation will not get on their feet and defend it. That is the strongest argument that we can have about the weakness of this legislation.

They're bringing in legislation, all of which, with the exception of the whistle-blower contents of it, the minister has the authority to deal with now. This bill is nothing but a stall tactic. They don't want to discuss this subject. The fact that they don't want to speak to it is the strongest argument that we have.

The authority they have in this case rests in the hands of the minister. She can do all the things now that this bill purportedly gives her authority to do. So this bill becomes redundant. It's already in her hands to do most of what this bill gives them the authority to do.

The fact is that they don't want this bill to be debated; they don't want this entire issue of Ornge helicopters to be talked about. The fact is that two of the three members that we had on the estimates committee when this issue was before them when they were having hearings on Ornge were intimidated, were threatened with intimidation or actually intimidated. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk received subpoenas, received cease-and-desist orders in the mail. Those kinds of things just don't happen in Ontario. My experience with Canadian politics goes back to the point when—I think when I was six months old. My mother told me that I was taken to a victory—I wasn't six months, I was four months old—in the August 8, 1943, election, when my grandfather was elected in Peel—not for the first time. But my politics goes back to that point. I've been involved in politics ever since, and I've never seen anything like this scandal.

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The minister from Winnipeg talks about how every government has their problems. Not like this, they don't.

You couple this with the \$190-million fiasco of the cancellation of a power plant that should be a Liberal election expense—I mean, these kinds of things are beyond the pale, especially in Ontario politics. Third World countries may have things similar to this, but not in Ontario. But here we are debating, or not debating, in the case of the government, the kinds of things that are happening in the Ontario that I love, in the Ontario that so many Ontarians love. People remember how Ontario was the leader in every aspect of Canada, and now we're not. Now we are not.

The member for Newmarket-Aurora received an absolutely despicable letter that was circulated around this chamber; it was circulated to the press—none of it substantiated. None of it could be substantiated; none of it's true. But it's out there. I was disappointed that the Speaker ruled that—he washed his hands of it. He could have initiated an order to have it investigated by the OPP. It's extremely difficult to trace an email. It's difficult and somewhat expensive, but it can be done. There isn't an email sent that can't be traced. But the Speaker decided that it wasn't worth the effort of this chamber. I'm afraid that decision may have just opened the floodgates. Let's see if there aren't innuendo and emails coming out against any one of us. That could happen in the future.

So the level of this House, with these kinds of scandals, is dropping month by month, week by week, day by day. It's a tremendous concern. All Ontarians should be concerned with this issue. We've made the simple request that the Premier should attend the committee hearings, and the Premier has so far denied that request.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would urge the member if he could at least keep his remarks to the bill in front of us.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm sure you would. You know one of the things that this bill talks about—most Speakers would not interrupt a member. I'm not arguing with you, Speaker; I'm just pointing out the fact that most Speakers would not interrupt a member that was attacking a Premier. Most Speakers don't take that kind of a position. You have. The Speaker of the House has.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Halton, the Speaker is standing.

I would just say to the member, I gave you five minutes. I was listening to everything that you said, and I asked you if you would speak to the bill.

Carry on.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you, Speaker. You know, the whistle-blower legislation that's involved in this piece of legislation is weak beyond imagination. A pilot from Ornge came and testified before the committee. Less than three days, or was it four days, later, he was suspended. I think his name was Bruce Wade. He was suspended, and then Ornge asks us to believe that the suspension was in process long before he showed up at the committee. They ask us to believe that. Would there be anybody in this House, outside this House or anybody

who heard that story who would believe that this pilot was going to be suspended even though he didn't attend the committee? I think not.

Now, if a whistle-blower comes in and talks about the things that are happening—and let's be clear about the things that are happening at Ornge. It is alleged that there are many, many trips of land ambulances that were billed for payment but were never taken. That's a *prima facie* case. If those allegations are proved true, somebody's going to jail. Some of those allegations may come very close to members over there. I wait for that day, because the Ontario I love and the Legislature I love don't put up with this kind of nonsense: the nonsense of Ornge, the nonsense of power plants, the nonsense and the expenditure of taxpayers' dollars that goes on and on and a Premier who won't be accountable for it.

Ontario is on the brink. We can go forward in a progressive way or we can continue along the track that this government has put us on—this government, which has brought Ontario down to this level. It's quite disgusting, to the point where the government now is so afraid of dealing with Ornge issues, they won't even reconvene the committees. That's their last tactic. The committees need to be re-established. It's been going on now for two or three weeks of debate. I'm not sure if this has ever happened before in Ontario, and yet it's happening now. You're threatening the very threshold of democracy with your actions right here in Ontario. That has happened. You won't reconvene the committees because you're afraid; you're terrified of what's going to happen in those committees. You are going to be found out. There is no such thing as secrets in this world, and you are going to be found out for what you have done.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities come to order.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That's okay. I think I'm done here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just want to continue with some of the other Liberals' involvement in Ornge, on the heels of what the member from Halton has said. For example, we talked about some of the other Liberals' involvement and what they had to say, like the former health minister. Here we have Premier McGuinty's former chief of staff Don Guy, who billed an average of \$3,670 a month to the law firm Fasken Martineau to provide strategic and public policy advice on Ornge—\$107,000 in total. Or the Liberal Party president, Alfred Apps; again, I noted his comments on Ornge. Working for the same firm, he billed Ornge and the public over \$9 million—I'll repeat that figure: \$9 million—and, of course, the firm's work involved advising Ornge on setting up a web of for-profit subsidiaries, compensation for its executives and whether the organization needed to disclose the \$1.4 million paid to Chris Mazza. So we see that not only were the Liberals intimately involved in the structure of Ornge, not only

were they being briefed, but they were briefing. They were part and parcel of Ornge.

To respond to some of the comments I heard earlier about Bill 50 being the solution, this bill has no real whistle-blower protection, no real public disclosure of salaries—it wouldn't cure the Chris Mazza problem—and critically, no Ombudsman oversight. So when they ask what we suggest, that's what we suggest, along with a select committee that can actually delve into Ornge. There's no question about our recommendations; we've been making them since this fiasco began. The opposition has been very clear about the recommendations and very clear that Bill 50 does not provide those recommendations' answers. Will we send it to committee? We want to, because we're going to amend it so that it does.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to say I'm very proud of Ontario, I'm proud of this Legislature, and I think the statement by the speaker earlier certainly questions the integrity of the Speaker. I've never heard that before in this House. I think that is terrible.

I also want to correct something. The solicitors for Ornge from 2000 through to 2009 and 2010 who spent \$9 million—it was the Lynne Golding firm. She happens to be the wife of Minister Clement, who brought in the initial work on this in 2000 when he was health minister. I just want to clear that. She's living with a Tory; she's probably a Tory.

I want to get back to the agreement, why Bill 50 is important. I want to say that there is whistle-blower legislation here to protect whistle-blowers. The person who got fired happened to say that he was very—he swore that he would bring down Ornge and he poisoned the workplace. That was the evidence I got out of committee hearings. I think if you have someone working in something as important as air ambulance, you don't want that poisoned workplace. This is what another pilot said was there and was the result of that statement. So I think that should be clarified as well.

I don't have much time, but this is the senior solicitor from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: "To conclude, the amended performance agreement and the proposed" Bill 50 "changes were introduced in response to the issues at Ornge identified by the Auditor General. They were designed to increase Ornge's accountability and transparency, and to protect the public interest." And all during her say before the committee, she said that this was a good agreement. It answered what the Auditor General wanted. It gives us the transparency. It gives us the responsibility we need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's interesting to hear some of the discussion here over this afternoon and quite frightening. When you hear the excuse, "Well, the minister didn't know because the chair didn't know"—I wasn't aware that it's a ministry of one. Did they not have the

oversight? I heard very clearly in the few meetings I went to from the witnesses that they did have the oversight. All they had to do was stop the funding, and that would have gotten anything they wanted. They were very clear on that.

It's interesting. We hear the speak that comes out here and how it's really—I don't know if I'm allowed to use the word "deception," but that's what I see it as. They talk about the legal firm that was there. I was there for that session too. What they're not saying is that their advice was different. Their advice was not to allow this to happen. But Ornge and the government did not take their advice, nor did they let them know they weren't taking their advice and they had another firm hired. So let's be truthful here when we talk about what those witnesses actually said. Yes, they did.

We look at some of the bad decisions. You look at the whistle-blowing. I'd like to know, what did this government do to investigate what happened to the suspension? Did they actually look at it, or was this just—I mean, this is just a red herring bill, trying to change the channel. You talked about previous governments. Yes, the ministers did resign. They stepped aside when there was any instance that they may be at fault. We don't see this in this government—and they were reassigned back when they were cleared, and not if they weren't. But where is this type of responsibility? We don't see it anymore. Certainly, the whole time I've been here, first of all, you've spent denying. It was very clear that the member from the NDP—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions or comments?

Point of order, the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I was going to speak for two minutes. I was going to do two minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You just did one.

The member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to join the debate here again. We have real concerns with Bill 50. It does not go far enough. The details of the bill do not go far enough. The fact that we cannot use freedom of information to get the information we need means that it does not go far enough.

That this government will still not appear before a select committee means that they will not be accountable. That the Premier still refuses to appear before a committee and answer questions means that we lose faith in this government. That there's no Ombudsman oversight means that this bill does not go far enough. That too much power resides within the executive of the government means that there is not enough oversight and that there is not enough whistle-blower protection. That's all very clear. We also know that with proper intention, the government could have done the right thing, that we could have avoided Ornge. The government was warned about it, and they chose not to do that.

I think it's also important, though, to reflect, as the member from Essex said before, that this is an ideo-

logical difference, that we in the NDP strongly believe in public service, that we believe that privatization leads to this kind of corruption, that there is always somebody—the Donald Trumps of this world—who will always get their cut, and our job in this Legislature is to protect the people of Ontario from that kind of cowboy capitalism.

I see tempers flaring here, and I actually appreciate that. I appreciate the frustration in this chamber. I see it with the government because they know that they've done wrong. They know that they should be ashamed of themselves here. They know that privatization of our services is not in the public interest—or at least I would hope that most of them know that. I see members from the Progressive Conservatives also frustrated because they can't bring this government to committee.

And the frustration that I feel is about the fact that there are people in this province who are denied services, who are denied programs, because we've given their money away.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Halton, you have two minutes for reply.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the comments from the members from Parkdale-High Park, Ottawa-Orléans—I'm not sure what his fixation is on Lynne Golding. Yes, she was a lawyer. Yes, she worked for Ornge till 2009. The company certainly went downhill after that. I would point out to the member that she is married to Tony Clement, she doesn't "live" with him, and the connotation that you leave is, quite frankly, disgusting. But I'm beginning to expect that from people on the other side.

The member from Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry, who talked about the Liberals trying to change the channel—he's right on with that one. You've been trying to change the channel by not putting in the committees, by doing all kinds of diversions, by threatening people who sit on the committee. You've taken this House to a new level, a much lower level, much—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to withdraw that comment that members of government have threatened two members of your party.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Withdrawn. The two parties, and I would make the comment—I'm not debating with you, but the two members of our caucus were threatened, and I don't know who else would do it, but be that as it may.

The member for Davenport was also very eloquent. He talked about the—

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You just ruled about 30 seconds ago that the remark mentioned by the member from Halton about threatening two members of his caucus was inappropriate. You ruled that he should withdraw that. He withdrew it, and then he stated it again in his speech, so I think he needs to be reprimanded for that or at least told not to keep mentioning any threatening. It's unparliamentary and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I certainly did not hear the exact words, but if the member did, I would ask you to withdraw it, and that would be your choice.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: If he takes exception to it, then I've been successful. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. But he was also very successful in that he used up all my time, which is the way that they—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that I can add some comment, without being too inflammatory, on Bill 50.

Now, let's put things in context. I think my good friend the member from Halton spoke with the deepest passion I've heard him speak with in some time. I think he was thinking of a gentler time, before the media and before the television, when his grandfather Kennedy was the Prime Minister of the province of Ontario. I could tell by his emotional tone that he felt the offences on both sides. People become very aggressive here. I think often the Speaker tries to get us to redefine the dignity of the place from time to time. So I'll put that out there. I do have the greatest respect for the member from Halton, and I understand the emotion and the sentiment he brings to his heartfelt remarks.

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I guess Bill 50 itself has to be put into context. The context pretty generally is this: It was an Auditor General's report—probably the AG was tipped off somehow on things untoward going on. In fact, you can tell by reading some of the transcripts that that's indeed what happened. There were people within the organizations who resigned. They didn't say anything, just "I'm outta here. This place is falling apart or corrupt." It's true. I'm not making any of this up for the levity of those viewing today.

When the Auditor General made his remarks, whistles and bells went off. But also, the taste of trust had been broken, both with the employees—and this is another health scandal. That's why everybody kind of links this into eHealth. It's an inability of this government to administer and to take the proper action or responses to lack of disclosure and accountability.

I think that's what the Auditor General was saying in a general way. And when we tried to call this issue before the Auditor General's committee, the public accounts committee, there was all sorts of manoeuvring, if you will, to prevent certain people from attending, people from the ministry as well as the minister herself. In fact the Premier was asked. He tends to in the House, because he's covered by the privilege of the Legislature—but before committee he's almost like a subpoenaed witness. He could be held accountable for things that may or may not have been brought to his attention, as was brought to the attention of the Minister of Energy, by not producing the reports on which he made decisions on behalf of the people of Ontario. He was basically found in contempt on the two energy plants. That's why they're related. We

feel in the Ornge thing, they've done everything to protect the Minister of Health.

Mr. Wilson here, the member from—I'd have to look at my schedule to see his riding is Simcoe-Grey—when he was Minister of Health, he had to step aside. He chose, after some questioning, to step aside. It fractured his career. He was a great minister—Minister of Energy. It was several different ministries that Mr. Wilson had. That minister has now been tarnished, quite frankly. I don't say that in a personal way. Once a minister has been found in contempt by the ruling of the Speaker—and there's now some discussion about will he produce the reports.

We're in the same boat with Ornge. There has been countless millions of dollars wasted. If you look at transcripts, you say, "Holy smokes!" They bought this company from a company that was already providing air ambulance service to the Ministry of Health on contract. They bought it, formed a company, and in that company, they went out and spent millions of dollars on property, millions of dollars on equipment.

The equipment itself, even the helicopter pilots were saying—and I'll be honest. The city of Oshawa airport was trying to have a depot. The operators were telling me, Mr. Speaker, that you couldn't do CPR properly in the interior design of the helicopter. The member from Peterborough had a letter to the minister under procurement about an operator from Peterborough that could provide the interior design for air ambulances. No, they went to Italy.

Then we find out that the person who was hired by the Italian company made \$200,000 or \$300,000. They weren't fit to play tennis. Those kinds of things may sound personal, but they are evidence that the thing was completely—and the people, the professional pilots and that inside the organization must be so disheartened. These are professional people who want to operate a public service with the highest level of standards.

What's the problem here? We should be throwing the doors open and getting this cleaned up. Forget the politics of it all—although at the end of the day, I remember people blaming Mike Harris or Ernie Eves for all these things. The buck stops at the top. I'm sorry; that's how this business works.

There really is no perfect answer to any question, but truth should prevail. When you provide barriers to truth and lose trust with the public, I believe you've been damaged—as the minister was basically accused of that damage. In fact, Minister Bentley wasn't the minister at the time that some of these inappropriate decisions were made. Now they're saying we agreed. Well, why did they sign the original agreements, whether it was Mississauga or Oakville? They made stupid mistakes. Yes, of course we agreed with closing them, but the issue is, the error was when they signed the contracts. They try to make it look like we're the ones who—no, they made a mistake. We agreed with it. So we're right; they're still wrong, because that's going to cost another billion dollars.

This is how it's related. When you see one thing is broken and you suspect another thing is broken—let's

say Ornge, in this case. We said the same thing in eHealth. Even this week, the diabetes registry is not working. They spent \$19 million and don't know anything. In this case here, there's a lot wrong.

Why aren't we having a full public inquiry? That's what Mr. Klees has been trying to get. The politics of that is, doing the right thing is the right policy. That's good politics: to be honest and straightforward with the people and take your hits.

As I said, Mr. Wilson, when he was Minister of Health—I had the privilege of working with him.

That's the honourable thing here, to start by being trustworthy and being responsible—whether it's the Minister of Health stepping aside, or whether it's the Minister of Energy stepping aside or indeed it's the Premier appearing before a committee to get this thing dealt with.

If I go back to this whole energy thing, it ain't over, Mr. Speaker.

They talk about Lynne Golding making so many millions of dollars, through the very respected firm, by the way. Are they accusing the firm—Fasken's is the name of the firm she worked with—of being a bad firm? They should say that outside. If that's what they think, if that's what they actually believe, say it outside. Those firms that provide legal advice to the ministry or to other companies are professional people. They're more professional than the people I've heard speaking here today, including me. So let's not dump them into this.

That whole energy thing is going to cost just short of a billion dollars. I'll tell you why. The clear money is \$300 million for the one plant and \$190 million for the other plant. No, the lawsuit is about loss and risk and damage to the company and their investors. That will be in the courts. The courts aren't free, Mr. Speaker. You know it. If Lynne Golding's company charged so much billing, that's because the mess inside Ornge was so bad that the Auditor General—and they hired the best to get to the bottom of it.

They make fun of those people trying to uncover the truth. That's like laughing at a judge at a murder trial. I don't think it's appropriate.

Bill 50 says they're going to do something about this whole thing for the whistle-blower. I'm in support, by the way, of whistle-blower protection, but if you read the section on it—I've read it—the section in here is pretty wordy. It isn't clear. Quite frankly, it looks at interpreting what they call "retaliation." They're trying to define what retaliation by the employer or the government would be.

Almost every investigative report has to flow through the minister, and now we can't get the ministers to release reports—who said what, when, and all these kinds of things.

I have lost complete confidence in the government. This is only a symbolic gesture. Bill 50, as some people have said, is a shell game. It is. It's nothing, really. It's a deflection so that the Minister of Health won't be held more accountable. She was in charge. She has the keys. When the gun is smoking and it's lying in the desk, you know who's guilty. That's what I say. They would have

stepped aside if they had the honour of this particular Legislature.

This is about trust. At the end of the day, do the right thing. The people of Ontario will understand. The more you fight them, you will pay.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank my colleague the member from Durham for his passionate speech. He raised some very valid points, some that I had not yet considered.

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The fact that any of the complaints will now have to go through the ministry for an investigation prior to any remedies where an employee would bring about concerns: That's interesting, considering we are having a lot of troubles at this point getting documents from various ministries, particularly the Minister of Energy.

I can't imagine that Ornge as an entity will ever be allowed to leave the scrutiny of the public. I don't think they are able to take a step in the wrong direction now with the level of scrutiny that is not only provided, thankfully, by the opposition parties in the House, but also the heavy scrutiny by the media, considering its faults throughout the year. But our concern here on this side of the House is the pattern that is being set here with Bill 50 that really waters down some of the oversight provisions when the government builds these private enterprises, or arm's-length agencies with private undertones. That's what we're concerned about.

I don't think they're getting it right. We think, ultimately, they got it wrong in the first place by even embarking on this venture. Imagine what we could have done if you had done it right: an entity whose sole purpose was to deliver the service of emergency care through air ambulance, fixed-wing or helicopter ambulance. Forget the spinoffs and the expertise and trying to turn it into a corporation. Deliver the service, deliver it right, and provide it to the people of the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There seems to be a disconnect between reality and some of the members opposite. Sections 7.7 and 7.2 are all about whistle-blower protection. As a matter of fact, 7.2 puts down one of the clearest definitions that I've seen, and I'm very familiar with whistle-blower legislation in municipalities. This is excellent, state-of-the-art protection of whistle-blowers. What your problem with it is, I can't—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: No. The member from Halton is heckling me again, which I find really interesting because he was so indignant about respect for the House. The member of a party who tabled a budget at a car parts dealer and manufacturer, which was probably one of the biggest insults to this Legislature and its process, has the nerve to get up and lecture us. The member from Halton, whose colleagues the member from Lanark-Frontenac—

Lennox and Addington and the former member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound banged their desks there for days, ignoring the Speaker like two-year-olds, is lecturing us on decorum in the House.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I'd ask the member from Peterborough, the member from Halton and the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry to come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I can only imagine that former Premier Kennedy hopefully saw better behaviour from his party of the day than this one has.

I have watched a lot of Legislatures. I've had the pleasure of serving in public service at all three orders of government. I never refer to the member from Halton as if he's from Hamilton. Maybe he's joined the municipal wing of his party; they seem to be confused about where Windsor—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, I'd ask you to keep your comments to the bill.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: At least on this side, Liberals know where Windsor and Winnipeg are.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I'm having to respond to this is because most of what came from the members opposite was ridiculousness and didn't address the issue. But if you want to go four to four on decorum, sir, we have nothing to learn from you, and if those things have found you—if you find those things so offensive, you must be offended when you look in the mirror, sir.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Frank Klees: I have listened with some interest to the debate. Having been involved in the public accounts hearings on the Ornge scandal for the last number of months, having heard from witnesses who have come forward, and having had a conversation as recently as yesterday afternoon with one of those witnesses, Mr. Bruce Wade, who after appearing here was suspended—the grievances filed against him were filed by one of the witnesses who came forward to sing the praises of the Minister of Health and the current acting chief executive of Ornge. And it turned out that every one of those grievances was unfounded after an extensive investigation. He was restored to his position. He was suspended again three days later for medical reasons, supposedly, and was told by the new management of Ornge that he would have to be subjected to a medical exam by a doctor appointed by Ornge—unheard of. That is Ornge. That is the new executive management of Ornge. Intimidation of witnesses—that's what's happening; and a defence of the status quo by the government—that is what's happening.

That's why we look forward to this bill, yes, getting out of this House and into committee so that we can once again get to work and expose how shallow this piece of legislation is. It is nothing less than smoke and mirrors, and what the government should do is get on the side of what is right rather than defend the indefensible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just wanted to continue to add. I talked about Alfred Apps and what he had to say about this government's culpability in Ornge, and Don Guy and what he did in terms of that culpability, and what George Smitherman, the former health minister, had to say about this government's culpability.

But interestingly enough, way back in 2010, on November 16, our former leader Howard Hampton also asked Deborah Matthews, then newly in that role, if she would check into Chris Mazza's funding, check into Chris Mazza's salary. You can check Hansard on this. This was 2010. They promised. Mr. Rafi, for the minister, promised to get back to Mr. Hampton at that time—and never did. So this is going back almost three years. Not only did the opposition question the government about this; not only did their own folk warn the government about this. I think it's pretty obvious to the people of Ontario, and certainly the editors of the Star, that this government is culpable where Ornge is concerned.

The question here before us is, is Bill 50 the solution? And our answer in the opposition is, no, it's not. It doesn't go far enough. Certainly we hope to move this bill on to committee. We're going to amend it so that we hope that it does go far enough, because we need Ombudsman oversight, we need real ministerial involvement, we need transparency and we need, as you just heard the member from Newmarket say, a different way of organizing Ornge that is not in place today. That's what we need. That's what we hope to get with Bill 50 at committee, and that's what we haven't had. We haven't had it since 2010, when this government knew full well what was going on at Ornge, and certainly the hearings proved that, although we're still asking for a select committee on this as well. That's what we're about in the New Democratic Party—transparency, responsibility, and actually some value given to the taxpayers and what they want, because they are the final arbiters.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Durham, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A very lively and interpretive kind of response, I would say. The member from Essex I think made a couple of very good points, and I'll come back to that in a moment. But I want to thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. He talked about decorum. I think we ought to stay away from that a bit. It's Thursday and people tend to be a bit more vocal about things.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Edgy.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, edgy.

I thank the member from Newmarket-Aurora. I have the greatest respect for the time and effort that he has spent in trying to get to the bottom of this scandal.

Let's face it, that's what Bill 50 is. It's more or less a shield against the minister, because they've admitted guilt. Why would they put in a new governance model if they weren't guilty of having a bad one? So they're

guilty. The courts have found them guilty and now they're just trying to cover it up. If you look at this, they're all appointed political hacks. Almost all of the board appointments are through order-in-council, which are political appointments. I don't say they're not competent people, but they'll be loyal to the Premier.

I would say that the final member, from Parkdale—High Park, speaks with great insight and passion.

But the member from Essex—let's end on this point today—brought up the purpose and the connection between Ornge and the power plants. Here's the connection: The power plants is a contempt order by the Speaker. Now here's the other connection: Minister Matthews, the Minister of Health, is going to be challenged on contempt in the coming days. The House leaders know this. She was requested by the member from, I think, Kitchener—Conestoga for information. That information has not been produced. Another example of—the word “cover-up” may be out of order, but I would say the words I would use are “not coming up with the material.” What are they hiding?

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like more time on this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. Let me say at the outset that it has been incredibly enlightening being here in the House over the last 10 months or so to get a close-up view of the controversies boiling around Ornge. I would like to commend the dedicated efforts of my colleague from Newmarket—Aurora and the member from Nickel Belt.

Once a poster child for the province's health care thinking, it has become cemented in the public's mind as a poster child for all the worst practices of this government. Watching the minister's footwork and listening to her wordplay has been especially instructive. To hear her tell it, she was little more than a patsy bamboozled by forces beyond her control. This from the head of the very government ministry that helped construct this house of cards.

The minister's words on the new performance agreement are especially fascinating. I find it somewhat astounding that when this government was constructing its 2005 performance agreement with Ornge, they couldn't seem to agree on the matter of performance. The government didn't think to integrate measures that would ensure that the performance metrics of this agency were tracked at all to ensure that it was always delivering the best possible care for Ontarians. To listen to the Minister of Health tell it, that's just the way things kind of turned out. If you only had the minister's talking points to listen to, you might be convinced that the entire Ornge debacle was some kind of fly-by-night operation that hoodwinked the province. But of course there are other accounts.

Speaker, it is extremely hard to look on Bill 50 as anything other than a wag-the-dog reaction to the Auditor General's scathing indictment of the agency and the government that was supposed to oversee it. Both documents were released the same day, after all. Bill 50 is not as constructive a reaction as you might hope for. It's not proactive in the right spirit. It seems like it was created as a tool of deflection before anything else. This government has been getting hammered over the parade of scandals at Ornge for months, Mr. Speaker—months. It's not as if they lacked advanced warning; they had been getting red flags in their faces for months if not years before their scandal broke open on the front page of the *Toronto Star*.

Even after releasing his 2011 annual report, a damning 460-page doorstop that catalogued the mismanagement and free-form spending sprees of the government, the Auditor General had to double back to Ornge so that his staff could map out the enormity of what had gone wrong—another 42 pages. Things got bad, and then things got worse. I guess you know the tune. So here we are trying to bolt the door after the horses have bolted.

The minister always takes great pain to pay tribute to the men and women on the front lines of Ornge, and I would like to salute them as well. It's certainly not their fault that they were set adrift by this government. They went above and beyond, making the best of whatever they were given. I have enormous respect for the professionalism, expertise and composure of Ontario's first responders and front-liners. The pilots, the paramedics, the engineers, dispatchers and administrators at Ornge should not become collateral damage of this government's mismanagement. These individuals hold our communities together whenever and wherever the fabric of our communities is strained, frayed and torn by suffering and tragedy.

I would like to thank the whistle-blowers at Ornge who stood up for patients and Ontarians when the ministers would not. Without their courageous disclosure, we would only have learned a fraction of what we know now. Without them, the abuses and the indulgences might have carried on without restraint, and this agency could have strayed much further into the fog.

Yet despite all of that, or perhaps because of that, the bill before us does not seem to attach much real value to whistle-blowers. In fact, the legislation arguably reins in whistle-blowers by failing to extend across-the-board protection to all individuals. The message that the government sends is that it's fine for some employees to be whistle-blowers, just not all employees. It's okay for whistle-blowers to reach out to some people in the name of protecting the public interest, but not others.

When you place restrictions on this kind of disclosure, you turn acts of conscience into thought crimes. How shameful is that, Mr. Speaker? It certainly speaks to a certain kind of alliance to transparency and accountability. It captures a prickly defensiveness and stubborn resistance to inspection. It almost suggests, dare I say it, a certain degree of moral cowardice. Anything less than

comprehensive whistle-blower protection is simply a camouflaged muzzle law.

This is the government's mask slipping again, just as it did a couple of summers ago around the secret G20 law that led to a massive violation of Ontarians' civil rights, just as it has around any number of thin government bills that do more to perpetuate the Liberal spin machine than promote the well-being of Ontarians.

Ironically, what Bill 50 does is underline the failures of this government and its Ministers of Health. I say "ministers" because this mess has been curated by three separate individuals who occupied that office. They are each uniquely flawed, and yet they share one thing in common. They stood idly by, were blind to the red flags and deaf to appeals. There is no reason to believe that amended legislation or Febreezed performance agreements will change those fundamental failures of oversight.

Yet these ministers had their heads in the sand, completely out of touch with this critical component of the most resource-intensive ministry of the entire government. They didn't think to question, couldn't be bothered to use the tools at their disposal, indulged the worst and naively hoped for the best: that nobody would find out, that nothing would go catastrophically wrong.

When we talk about the excess at Ornge, we should not just be talking about an unthinkable waste of precious resources and the haphazard management of a critical link in our health care sector. There was also an excess of entitlement.

Despite the defensive posturing of the Minister of Health and the detached internal dialogue we've seen from some of her colleagues, the fact remains that this government had every authority, had the tools needed to wade into this organization and get it sorted out. We've heard numerous times during this debate that the Minister of Health who presided over Ornge had the power to intervene at any point to stop the circus, to bring the

sideshow to a halt and restore balance and discipline. We've heard legal opinion that under article 15 of the original 2005 performance agreement, as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act—again, Mr. Speaker, there were clear and repeated warnings around Ornge, warnings about a dark whirlpool of financial irregularities; awestruck accounts of sky-high executive salaries; grave details about operational shortcomings that put the lives of staff and patients at risk. All of it was brushed under the carpet by some of the highest-ranking members of this government. It's shameful, Mr. Speaker—shameful.

Where was this leadership years ago when the seeds of this scandal were first scattered on the wind? And where is the leadership now? Is Bill 50 really the best this government can muster? Obviously committee work will tune things up, but as a starting point, Bill 50 is sorely wanting. It seems to point to the fact that this government has not truly absorbed the lessons of its scandal, which is a scandal in itself.

We have logged enough time together in this House to have a fair bit of shared familiarity when it comes to Ornge. We should all be able to agree that we want to fix it once and for all. If and when this bill goes to committee, it should be amended to reflect a wholesale commitment to transparency and accountability.

Open it to independent inspections by freedom-of-information law. Afford the Ombudsman oversight and investigation powers over Ornge. Demonstrate to a shocked and skeptical public that this government is worthy of their trust, that we hold their best interests paramount. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 24 September 2012

Lundi 24 septembre 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 24 September 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 24 septembre 2012

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: I'd like to welcome a special guest today: Major James Stocker, of the Queen's York Rangers. Major Stocker is stationed at the Denison Armoury. Welcome.

Also, Speaker, I want to extend a special welcome to Mr. Darryl Wolk, my former executive assistant, who is now a strategist with the Fair Share for Peel Task Force, and his colleague Krista Barnett. Welcome.

I would also take this opportunity to welcome representatives of COCA, the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, who are here today to share with us some of their insights into the challenges facing the construction industry. We're all going to be effectively lobbied. I want to give fair warning to all members of this Legislature to be alert and to listen to what they have to say.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation's pink bus tour.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's deal with that first. The Minister of Health is seeking unanimous consent to wear the pink ribbons in honour of the pink bus that's visiting today. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me welcome to the Legislature guests from the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation on their pink bus tour today at Queen's Park. Dr. Gurmit Singh, the board chair, is with us; Sandra Palmaro, the CEO of the Ontario region; Beth Easton, VP, grants and health promotion; Karen Malone, VP, development; Adrienne Palmer, director, comms and GR; Megan Primeau; Dr. Betty Power, who is a volunteer advocate and a woman affected by breast cancer; Bruce Cole is a volunteer advocate with a family member personally affected by breast cancer; Michael Cheung, a pharmacist from Shoppers Drug Mart; Sean Webster, VP, public affairs, from Shoppers Drug Mart; and Sean Beharry from CIBC. Welcome all.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming Ian McKay and Helen Grace, who are here to watch their granddaughter be the page captain today.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I have four guests today in the gallery: Alan and Nancy McQuillan, from London West, and their friends Gerald and Margaret Duffy, who are visiting from London, England.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to introduce today the family of our page Maya Stibbards-Lyle. We have Nicola Lyle, Adam Stibbards, Lily Stibbards-Lyle, Ian McKay and Helen Grace.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'd like to welcome Don Gosen, chair of the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, COCA, and staff and representatives from their 30 member associations from across the province, who have joined us today for the fourth annual COCA Construction Lobby Day.

COCA's 30 member associations represent over 10,000 construction employers that employ over 400,000 skilled workers from across Ontario. Please join me in welcoming them here today at Queen's Park, and I invite all members of the Legislature to join them for their lobby day reception in the legislative dining room from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. today.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to join my colleagues in welcoming members from COCA here today, particularly two members from my riding and the area of Windsor-Essex county: Jim Lyons, who is the executive director of the Windsor Construction Association, and Dan Hanson, who is president of the Windsor Construction Association. I welcome them here today and look forward to working with them on an ongoing basis.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Please join me in welcoming to the members' gallery and the Legislative Assembly Mr. Naguib Kerba and Mrs. Donna Kerba, outstanding citizens and local volunteers in Mississauga South. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome Isabelle Tremblay, who is the mother of our page Mathilde from Ottawa Centre. I also want to acknowledge Mathilde's father, Jean-Marc Papillon, and sister Léa Papillon, who came to Queen's Park this weekend and got a great tour of this great building of ours. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to welcome and introduce the family of page Zakhar Husak. His mother, Danusia, is here and his father, Ihor, as well as, probably, his brother Lukian.

Ms. Soo Wong: I would like to welcome a constituent of mine, Victor Wong, who is a University of Toronto Scarborough campus student visiting us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The time for introduction of guests is over.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I have a question to the Acting Premier. One of the debates with our arbitration system is around the notion of ability to pay. I do want to remind you that as finance minister, you have increased spending dramatically. The costs of the public service are now well above 46% to 50% in wages and benefits.

It has had a snowballing impact on municipalities. Municipalities will argue that ability to pay should mean with the existing tax base. Arbitrators have said that ability to pay means that municipalities can go back and increase taxes.

Who do you stand with, Minister, the municipalities or rogue arbitrators who say municipalities can always increase taxes, that they have bottomless pockets?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'll remind the Leader of the Opposition that he was part of a government that amended the Arbitration Act to demand that arbitrators take into account the ability to pay. That has not had the effect, I think, that the government of the day desired.

This is a complicated issue. In our budget, we laid out a number of changes to the arbitration process that were taken right from Leader of the Opposition's campaign document. What they did, Mr. Speaker, was they voted to remove those sections of the budget.

So I welcome his desire to discuss this issue in terms of moving forward. I would ask him if, at this point in time, he would now be prepared to support those changes, which we believe would have helped give clarity, timeliness and better decisions from arbitration.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have a suggestion for the finance minister: Why doesn't he support the Ability to Pay Act to make decisions reflect the ability of ordinary taxpayers to pay those bills? Mayor Francis, in your home municipality of Windsor; Mayor Scarpitti, in Markham; Mayor McCallion, in Mississauga; and Mayor Watson, who you sat with for a number of years, have all called for comprehensive reform to the arbitration system to reflect the ability to pay.

1040

One of the arbitration decisions that municipalities regularly get upset with is for Thunder Bay firefighters, who saw a pay increase between 3.25% and 5.8% for multiple years. I'd ask the minister: In the so-called reforms that you brought forward, can you point to the schedule and the section where you address ability to pay, and how would you have made a difference for Thunder Bay taxpayers who saw their assessment fall by 39% in their industrial base?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would refer the Leader of the Opposition to his government's Bill 26, the Savings and Restructuring Act, 1996, which was introduced by my predecessor, the Honourable Ernie Eves, Minister of Finance, and which put into the Labour Relations Act the requirement that arbitrators look at ability to pay. The

Leader of the Opposition is being a little bit disingenuous, Mr. Speaker, in that context, recognizing that power exists.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did hear something that I would consider unparliamentary. Please withdraw.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I withdraw that, Mr. Speaker.

I think the Leader of the Opposition is not conveying the fact that the powers he's asked for are already within the act, and that is part of what challenges us.

I would again ask him: We brought forward a number of reforms to arbitration in the budget which his caucus systematically removed from the budget, even though they were taken from his platform. I'd invite his reconsideration of that decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Speaker, what a weak answer by the finance minister. No wonder he's going to go down in history as one of the weakest finance ministers in the history of the province, adding more to the debt than any—since 2008 alone, you've added \$100 billion to the provincial debt, spending is up \$22 billion, and I get that kind of supercilious response from the minister on such an important issue.

I'll ask the minister again: He may have seen some of the clippings on Friday. Peterborough firefighters were just given a 10% wage increase. The municipality was forced to withdraw almost \$500,000 from its contingency fund. If the reforms you put in the budget are the best you can do, could you please point out exactly where in your so-called reforms it would deal with issues like Peterborough firefighters that got a 10% wage increase that taxpayers simply can't afford?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the interest of what I would call a meaningful discussion, as opposed to just cheap rhetoric, Mr. Speaker, the reforms we provided in the budget would have strengthened the ability-to-pay provisions that the government he was part of put into the act. I regret that his caucus removed the following schedules from the budget: schedule 1, the Ambulance Services Collective Bargaining Act; schedule 22, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act; schedule 30; schedule 52; schedule 56; schedule 68. All of those amendments were taken from that party's campaign platform. They chose not to do what they said they would do. I'd invite their reconsideration of that matter, as we believe it's an important matter to ensure that we get back to balance in a timely fashion.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Finance, who seems to be calling it in on this issue. You reference your own legislation, which I have. I have the schedules you referenced; I've read them in detail. But, Minister, I assume this legislation stood in your name and you would understand your own legislation, but your legislation does not mention anywhere ability to pay. You do

allow for decisions to be made within 12 months by arbitrators, and it goes to 16 months, and then it can be appealed beyond that at the Ontario Labour Relations Board. You ask for written decisions only if requested. We think they should be mandatory. We think the period should be three months. These are real reforms to legislation. If you want something that reflects where the PC Party stands, it's the Ability to Pay Act, standing with hard-working taxpayers who simply can't afford these increases.

Minister, since you've run out of ideas and you say you're using PC ideas to write your legislation, why don't you do the right thing? Follow the PC plan and vote in favour of the Ability to Pay Act so taxpayers can start affording the bills.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, Mr. Speaker, he was part of the government that put ability to pay into the act. It's there. That's why we put in these amendments to strengthen that ability to pay. They were ideas taken from their platform; I have enumerated the schedules.

Our desire is to make the system more transparent, more accountable, more fair, so that all workers in the public and broader public sectors in Ontario are fairly treated. The amendments we put forward in the budget would have achieved that. They were recommended to us by the official opposition.

My hope is that if, at some stage in the coming days and weeks, we bring forward those sorts of changes again, the Leader of the Opposition this time would do what he said he would do in the campaign and support them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: There's an arbitrator named Martin Teplitsky, who's commonly used in these decisions. He gave professors and librarians at U of T salary increases of 4.5% over two years, I'd remind you, Minister, in the time frame that you said you were going to bring in a wage freeze.

When Teplitsky was questioned about this, he said that arbitrators are not the "minion of government," and they won't respect your voluntary wage freeze. That cost the university \$20 million and probably resulted in higher tuition fees or 100 fewer professors. We're going to stand up to the Teplitskys of the world. We're going to have independent arbitrators who will respect the ability to pay and taxpayers who pay the bills.

Minister, I ask you: Who calls the shots? Is it the province of Ontario or rogue arbitrators like your friend Martin Teplitsky?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the Leader of the Opposition that arbitrators routinely have rejected the amendments you put into the act when you said they would work. I will point you to the Hansard; the quotes are there.

We brought forward a number of changes that would, in fact, provide for clarity, transparency and better accountability on arbitrated decisions. These were recommended to us by the official opposition. We put them into the budget bill in the form of a number of schedules.

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing reminds me municipalities were very supportive of them.

I would again urge my colleague, the leader of the official opposition, that if you're willing to support those, we will likely bring them forward at some point in time again. This time, we hope that the position of the official opposition will be consistent, to do what they said they would do, which, in this case, they failed to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think the minister must be distracted by other motivations. The minister knows that AMO in fact called your reforms weak. They said that they would not address ability to pay; ours will.

Another rogue arbitrator named Kevin Burkett recently gave 3,400 electricity workers increases of 6% over two years at Ontario Power Generation. Mind you, this was at a time there was supposed to be a voluntary wage freeze. Mr. Burkett said there is "no binding force or effect" to the Liberal two-year wage freeze.

They're thumbing their noses not only at you, Minister; they're thumbing their noses at taxpayers across the province of Ontario. We say enough is enough. It's time for bold reform that'll respect the ability of taxpayers to pay the bills. We'll look to local economic circumstances. We'll toss out the rogue arbitrators and put in place an independent panel that will have respect for taxpayers who pay the bills.

Will you support our legislation and bring real change for the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Acting Premier.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition was given the opportunity to make the arbitration system clear, transparent and more fair, not only did he not support it, he took the sections out of the budget that would have done just that. He disappointed the mayors of this province when he did that. They were supportive of those initiatives.

Those changes would have brought greater clarity to decisions. They would have improved and enhanced the ability-to-pay provisions that the government he was part of put into the legislation. The Leader of the Opposition can't have it both ways. You can't demand change, then vote against change. You can't ask for fairness and clarity, then vote against clarity and fairness.

This is about doing the right thing that's fair and responsible for all workers in the public and broader public sectors. I'd urge the leader of the second party to reconsider his decision to not do what he said he would do and support those amendments which will enhance the ability to pay and provide greater clarity and transparency to all arbitrator decisions.

1050

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. The government has committed to releasing documents relating to cancelled private power deals in Mississauga and Oakville not too long from now, a little bit later today. While we wait, I'm just wondering if the Acting Premier can give us an estimate of the cost of cancelling those plants.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The leader of the third party is quite right. We will be complying with the order of the Speaker, as I always said. All of the documents going out with respect to the Oakville and the Mississauga matters will be released. The Oakville costs we've spoken to in the documents earlier—sorry, the Mississauga costs we spoke to in the documents earlier.

I am pleased to advise the House that agreements have been reached which will result in the relocation of the Oakville gas plant to the Lennox facility in eastern Ontario. I'll be speaking to that later on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the government said that they're still negotiating with the private power interests. It looks like they've cooked up yet another deal. I guess the question that we really have is, what's the cost of the deal that they cooked up this time? Can the Acting Premier tell us exactly what's on the table? How much is it that the company, that did not build a power plant now in Oakville, is going to gain at the taxpayers' expense?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The memoranda—there are two of them—relating to the relocated power plant to eastern Ontario will be released today. Both will be released today, as will a statement with respect to costs: the sunk, unrecoverable costs. The unrecoverable costs from that are \$40 million. The cost of the net revenue requirement, the monthly cost of the new contract, is less than the old contract, and equipment that has been purchased will be repurposed and has gone into part of the calculation of the lower, new contract.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Only the Liberals can congratulate themselves on the mess that they've created here, Speaker.

When the Liberal government embraced private power, they started signing these great deals. They promised they'd be taking the politics right out of electricity, with the goal of having a system that was transparent and accountable and, most importantly for families, affordable. Instead, we had a Liberal campaign team ripping up contracts, scrambling to keep them from the public, and the most expensive electricity in the entire nation, Speaker.

Is the government proud of what they are giving to the people? Are they proud of what they're getting in these private power deals?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, we did what we were elected to do, and that's to listen to local residents

and listen to elected officials. We did not proceed with either of those plants, a position supported by both opposition parties. We have now entered into negotiations and relocated both plants: the Mississauga one to an OPG site in Sarnia-Lambton, the Oakville one to an OPG site in Lennox, where there's already a gas and oil facility. We have done the right thing by listening to the people of the local municipalities, and both plants will contribute to the needs of the power system in the province of Ontario.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Unfortunately, after nearly a decade in office, people see a bit of a pattern with this government. A government that was elected to put people first has been putting themselves first. A government that was elected on a promise of change now plays the same cynical games that they used to be critical of. Does the Acting Premier realize that the private power mess that they are in now is a sign that this government has long ago lost its way? If so, what exactly are they going to be able to do about it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thanks very much, Speaker. As I indicated earlier, your ruling was clear with respect to all of the documents, as I indicated the day you delivered it; they'll all be released today.

We listened to the local residents in both Mississauga and Oakville. We listened to the elected officials. We decided not to proceed with the plants; interestingly, a position both opposite parties took. But we didn't stop there. We negotiated hard, we've relocated both plants, they will contribute to the needs of the system, and we've delivered value to the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's much better. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, who they listened to were Liberal campaign operatives during the campaign.

People want to see their government focused on the challenges that they're facing, not the challenges that the governing party happens to be facing. Now, after nearly two years and hundreds of millions of dollars, we're beginning to get some of the facts behind some of these private power deals—deals made by the Liberal Party and paid for by the people of this province.

Has the government learned any lessons yet, Speaker?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Just to remind us, when all parties in this House took the position—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: —that those power plants would not proceed, all parties knew there was a cost attached to them. Contracts had been signed.

What have we done? We have negotiated hard, following up on our commitment to residents and local officials, relocated Mississauga to an OPG site in Sarnia-Lambton and, as of this morning, agreed to relocate the Oakville plant to an OPG site in Lennox, in eastern Ontario, where there has long been a gas-fired facility. We've followed up on our commitment to residents and our commitment to the people of Ontario, negotiated hard and delivered value to the system for the people of the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To all members, I did say please.

Leader?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats, of course, are the only party in the Legislature who proudly and consistently stand against any kind of private power scheme.

The people of this province—the people of Ontario—are worried about some pretty fundamental things. They're worried about holding on to a job; they're worried about finding a doctor. But they're also scrambling to pay the bills at the end of each and every month, and they're paying the highest electricity bills in the entire country. They have a right to know how their money is being spent.

Will the government acknowledge to the good people of this province that they were wrong in the first place to try to hide the cost of cancelling the gas plants from the hard-working families who pay the tab, and will they commit to being transparent in future, the way they used to be in the past?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I say, Speaker, when all parties made the commitment not to proceed with those plants, it was very clear to all parties—very clear—that there was a cost to that commitment. We've negotiated hard to relocate the plants and deliver value for Ontarians at the same time as we've been rebuilding an electricity system, bringing on the generation that people need, getting out of coal and cleaning up the generation system so that we're better able to breathe the air in this province. The fact of the matter is, during four of the hottest months in Ontario history, we had reliable power, enough power, and it was cleaner than ever before.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Speaker, I've had the privilege of sitting in this chamber for 22 years, and never have I seen such a shameful display from a government. This will be a sad week for democracy in Ontario as the Liberal government is held accountable and could be reprimanded by this House for its grotesque abuse of power. The cancellation of two power plants amounted to nothing more than a selfish and desperate political manoeuvre to cling to power.

So I ask the minister, why is he a willing participant in this scandal? Why is he determined to protect the very same people who have ruined his career?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I said in my earlier answers, when the Speaker gave the ruling, we indicated we would comply. All of the documents are going out today. I indicated very clearly that I would comply. All the documents are going out today—thousands and thousands of pages of documents for all to see.

We happen not only to have taken the position endorsed by the party opposite and third party not to proceed with the plants, knowing there was a cost, as all did; we negotiated hard, have relocated the plants, have agreements for both, and they'll contribute good value to the people of the province of Ontario as they're built and plugged into the supply system.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again, to the Minister of Energy: The eyes of the parliamentary Commonwealth will be watching as the Liberal government's arrogance and profound sense of entitlement meets this chamber's powers of accountability.

The McGuinty government has delayed releasing the power plant documents for months. At every turn, they made fallacious arguments to justify their secrecy. Liberal members of the estimates committee, acting on instructions from the Premier, obstructed and stymied the committee from fulfilling its mandate. This is why, Speaker, we will pursue the contempt motion against the minister to combat the dangerous precedent set by this government and to ensure that abuses of power do not go unchecked—doing our jobs, I say to the minister.

So I ask the minister: Who cancelled the two power plants, and why are you protecting them?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It took me a while to click in, but I believe the member may have used a word that would not be acceptable in the House. I just caution him and remind him that, not having a—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Interjection: Throw him out, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And you, as well.

I caution him about that. I don't have a thesaurus in my pocket, but I do believe he did say something, and I would caution anyone from using unparliamentary language.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think members need to realize that there was an order by this House for the production of all documents related to the Mississauga and Oakville plants. That order will be fully complied with. Within about an hour, all members will have access to every single document.

I must stand here, Mr. Speaker, and say how disgusted I have been by the callous and vindictive way in which the opposition have come to the table to try to negotiate this. The Minister of Energy is a man of honour. He is a minister who rolled up his sleeves and sat down, as he just announced, and got a deal in this matter. He has

worked to protect the public interest, and the attitude and approach of the official opposition have been beneath them and have been beneath any member of this House. They owe all of us an apology for their behaviour, particularly to the Minister of Energy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to remind all members—and I'll try it again. I would like to remind all members that when I stand, it gets quiet. Number two: When I do get that quiet, you don't use it as an opportunity to give your parting shots. I do not want this to escalate; I want it to be brought down.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Centric Health Corp., one of the fastest-growing for-profit health care organizations in North America, recently purchased Shouldice Hospital. As you know, Mr. Speaker, Shouldice is operating as a for-profit hospital under an exemption, but now the minister must approve the transfer of the hospital to Centric.

The minister has frequently spoken about the importance of not-for-profit care. My question is simple: Is the minister going to allow the sale of this hospital to an American for-profit company?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I know this is an issue that has captured the attention of many people across Ontario.

What I can tell you, Speaker, is that there is an application that is before the ministry; there is due diligence being done at this time. I can assure you that our commitment is to publicly funded health care; to public, not-for-profit care. We will not be adding any new for-profit beds in this province. Our commitment is to do what's right for patients.

There are a small number of hospitals that were grandfathered when medicare came into effect 50 years ago. Shouldice is one of those hospitals. I can assure you that I will look carefully when it does reach my desk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: In the process of due diligence, I'm sure the minister is receiving just as many letters as I am from nurses, from physicians and from many, many concerned Ontarians. They are concerned about the impact on patients, the precedent this sale will be setting and the government's ability to regulate the care at this hospital. They simply want the minister to uphold the Canada Health Act.

I ask the minister again, will she listen to the care providers and to the people of Ontario and reject this sale?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that I always listen very, very carefully to the patients and to the care providers. Our commitment to public health care is as clear as any government's

could be. This is in the early stages of application. Due diligence, as I said, is under way now. I will make this decision with the best interests of patients in mind.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. As a member from Toronto and from Scarborough Southwest, I can tell you that one of the priorities on the minds of my constituents is jobs and the economy. On Friday in my constituency office I spent the day meeting with constituents who are concerned about many things, including jobs and the economy.

We often hear members of the opposition talking down Ontario's economy. At the same time, every economic indicator that I've seen would confirm that our economy is growing and our economic plan is working. I understand that Site Selection magazine has recently recognized Ontario as being the most competitive jurisdiction in Canada. This is a magazine that comes out of Georgia in the United States.

Can the minister outline what the recognition says about Ontario and the progress we are making to build a strong economy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question. I'm very pleased that Ontario has been recognized by Site Selection magazine as the most competitive province in Canada for the third straight year.

Site Selection magazine is a prestigious international publication. Their focus is on economic development and corporate real estate. The honour is presented to the provincial economic development agency that performed the best between June 2011 and May 2012, and our government has been recognized for our partnerships with companies like Flying Colours, Knorr Brake, Cytec, IBM and the auto sector. This third party recognition confirms that Ontario is Canada's most competitive jurisdiction and one of the best places in the world in which to invest. Our efforts to build and strengthen our economy during these uncertain times are working.

Ontario is recognized the world over because of the strength and competitiveness of our economy. It's time for the opposition to stop talking down our economy and join us in trying to build it up. Third party recognition indicates we're going in the right direction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Maybe we should get a copy of Site Selection magazine to the opposition so they can read it.

I'm always rewarded to see people outside Ontario recognizing our success here in Ontario. Sometimes Ontarians can get caught up in the negativity of the opposition parties when we together have so much to be proud of. It's great to hear Ontario's economic plan is so well regarded internationally.

At the same time, I'd be interested in knowing whether the success is mirrored throughout the province. I'm

wondering what else Site Selection magazine's analysis of Canadian cities says about Ontario's communities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I find it hard to believe that the opposition just don't want to hear good news about Ontario. It's pretty obvious by the heckling on a very positive question.

But let me share with you some of the findings of Site Selection magazine regarding some of those cities and communities, many of which are represented by those members.

Toronto was in the top three cities for corporate development, with 15 projects under way. Hamilton was number one, with more than \$527 million in corporate facility projects. London is expected to have 3.6% growth this year, the sixth highest in Canada. The Belleville-Quinte region was recognized for helping bring more than 600 jobs to the area, and Waterloo region was recognized for a number of expansions.

While this is great news for Ontario and it's great news that we have created 325,000 net jobs since the recession, it's also important to note that this success translates throughout the province. The opposition continue to talk these efforts down, but we'll continue to work with communities to build our community up.

1110

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

In our parliamentary system of government, the opposition is compelled to hold the government to account—this is our job—and it is increasingly clear that either the Minister of Energy or the Premier signed off on the decision to withhold the Oakville and Mississauga power plant documents until after the by-elections were over. But it now appears that the minister is the one who has to answer for this most egregious political manoeuvre. If there is any hope of correcting this unprecedented deceit, the full extent of the Liberal campaign team's involvement in cancelling the gas plants must be revealed.

Will the minister commit to this House today that all the internal emails to and from the Liberal campaign team relating to the cancellation of the gas plants will be included in the documents that he releases today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, the opposition cannot take good news. The simple fact of the matter is that the estimates committee had asked for certain documents. We tried to put forward—in fact, we put forward the case that there were certain public interests that needed to be balanced. There were discussions that were held between the House leaders. The House leaders indicated that they did not care about these public interests, that they wanted the documents as requested by the committee. As a result, in a very short period of time, I think in roughly about half an hour, all the documents that were asked for by the committee will be made public.

They will be tabled in the Legislature and copies will be made available for any members who are interested, as well as the general public.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock for a moment, please.

In the to and fro of question period and the volume—the noise that goes on—at any time, I do my best to hear all of the questions and all of the answers. I do not always catch the things that are said that may or may not be somewhat unparliamentary or very unparliamentary. I hold the members responsible for using language that is deemed to be parliamentary. If at any time anyone does use unparliamentary language, it is not just my job to catch it; it's all of our jobs to catch it, in that all of us are charged with trying to find a way to make our point, to ask our question, to answer the question in a way that's deemed appropriate in this place.

Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: My supplementary goes back to the Minister of Energy.

The people of Ontario rightly expect that each and every member of this House will uphold the public trust, acting in the best interests of the people we're privileged to represent. However, this government has violated these principles of trust, putting their selfish political interests ahead of the people of Ontario.

It appears that in following orders, the Minister of Energy's actions have potentially placed him in contempt of the Legislature. We implore the Minister of Energy to make his next decision the right one, which would begin to restore some semblance of credibility to his tattered reputation. Will he guarantee that the full and complete scope of the involvement of the Liberal campaign team in the decision to cancel the gas plants—all correspondence, internal emails, telephone messages, notes from meetings—will be disclosed with the document that he releases today?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as I said, all the documents that were requested by the committee will be made public. But let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, and through you, let me tell members of the House about the hard work of the Minister of Energy. Let me quote from a statement that came out this morning. This is the work of the Minister of Energy:

"[A]n agreement has been reached between the Ontario Power Authority and TransCanada Energy to relocate the proposed 900-megawatt natural gas plant originally planned for Oakville to lands at Ontario Power Generation's Lennox generating station site near Bath, in eastern Ontario's Lennox and Addington county...."

"The new site will take advantage of existing transmission lines and other infrastructure, as well as the expertise of local workers. The construction of the plant is expected to provide up to 600 construction jobs and approximately 25 permanent jobs."

"The total costs that cannot be repurposed at the new site are approximately \$40 million. This includes all payments"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. The government announced last week that the Eglinton rail line will be run by a private company. The TTC says that it will not subsidize the operating costs of this privately operated line.

My question is, why is the government pursuing a plan that will either increase provincial costs or hike fares and reduce services for transit users?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. I think the member clearly doesn't understand Infrastructure Ontario's alternate financing and procurement. It's a system that has evolved tremendous savings for the province of Ontario. It's a system that has been accepted by anybody who has anything to do with procurement, whereby the person who is delivering the project is responsible for the cost of any overruns or the cost of not finishing on time.

We have done 52 projects worth \$21 billion in the province of Ontario. We have saved billions of dollars from our original budgets. It's one of the most successful processes in North America. I will wait for the supplementary to answer this issue a little more specifically.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I say to this minister and to this government: We are about to embark on another 407, and you took them to court, even.

The government's plan to shut out the TTC from operating the Eglinton LRT means one of three things: The province is going to have to subsidize a private operator; fares are going to increase; or service levels are going to be reduced.

Why is the government increasing provincial costs and hurting public transit users by shutting out the TTC?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The NDP is off the rails on this one. First of all, they have no plan. We are committed to building the safe, reliable transit that Toronto commuters expect and deserve. Customers will pay one fare, and we will ensure seamless transfers between the LRT, subways and buses. We have been clear from day one that we are committed to using alternate financing and procurement to deliver Toronto's new LRT lines. In fact, Metrolinx have been at the table with the TTC for the last five or six months. They are about one centimetre away from negotiating, by agreement, the process to move forward with \$8.4 billion of investment in the city of Toronto's transit—\$8.4 billion delivered by this caucus, when that caucus has no plan whatsoever for transit.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

New question. The member from—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

New question. The member from Scarborough—Agin-court.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Students have returned to post-secondary institutions as of this month to pursue their education. This is also a period of time in which many new students are entering our system and getting their schedules, figuring out the books they need for class and organizing themselves to manage their time.

The Ontario Student Assistance Program, also known as OSAP, helps Ontario students pay for their education. This loan helps students keep more of the income they earn while they're in school. Many students in Scarborough—Agincourt have brought to my attention they have not received their OSAP funds yet.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, can the minister let us know if the students are receiving their OSAP funds on time?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for her question. For 50 years, this week, the third week of September—or the past week—would normally be the week in which students would get their OSAP funds. In fact, it was several weeks ago that students started to get their OSAP funds. As of last week, with our new OSAP express service, no one had to wait in line—no lineups this year. This was the first time in Ontario history where if you went to a campus there were not lineups for OSAP. Why was that, Mr. Speaker? Because it was all online this year. Students went online; they could sit in their bedrooms, or they could do it in the classroom. The lineups are gone.

1120

The second thing we have to report, Mr. Speaker, is that as of today, 215,000 students, 86% of those who applied for OSAP, already have their money. That's a record—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Minister. It's great to hear that students are getting their OSAP faster than last year because of improvements our government has made to the system.

I was lucky to receive post-secondary education here in Ontario. As an immigrant, I benefited from the financial assistance provided through OSAP. When looking back, the single best investment I ever made in my life was post-secondary education.

Each year, OSAP enables many students to pursue education in their preferred field of study. If not, they would have to work for more hours while taking heavy course work in a college or university.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, how is the minister ensuring that our students have access to the financial assistance they need?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Just to finish the math that I started before I was interrupted, that leaves about 30,000 students who haven't yet got their OSAP but will shortly. They get it within five days of registering. These are stu-

dents who either did not provide complete information, or a handful of colleges and universities have not been able to adapt to the new software program, which they will be on track for in January. This is the biggest step forward we've had in turnaround.

They're also getting \$1,680 in universities, and \$730, Mr. Speaker, because this government has tripled the amount of money for student aid in the last eight years from just over \$300 million to over \$1 billion. We capped student debt at \$7,300.

The party opposite, the ones who were just chirping, who are so concerned about student aid, the ones that never have a political motive for anything, put students behind their own political interest and cut student aid by 48%, followed by the second party, who then went and cut it a further 41%—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Energy. Here we go again: another sole-sourced contract announced by the Minister of Energy yet again this morning. A little history: This summer, when pressed, the Liberals finally came clean with the fact that the cancellation of the Mississauga gas plant was political. It was a seat-saver. Then they finally came clean with the amount of \$190 million, and we don't even get one megawatt of power for that amount of money. Then we learned there's a sole-sourced contract to relocate the plant to Lambton. Now they are pulling the same stunt here in Lennox.

My question to the minister is, how much cancellation money is buried into that new sole-sourced contract?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, we listened to the residents, and you know what? All three parties supported not moving ahead with those two plants—all three, all of them in this House. So we negotiated the relocation of Mississauga with the same proponent that had won the competitive process, competitive agreement, to begin with. It's a relocation. We've negotiated the relocation of Oakville with the same proponent, the same entity, that won the competitive one in the first place. They're the same-sized plants, the same type of plants, to contribute electricity to the same system for the people of the province of Ontario. This is good value for the people of Ontario pursuant to the contracts originally signed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Minister, you just announced another scandal in the making, another secret sole-sourced contract to Lennox. Minister, you've kept hidden from us for two years the cost of this politically motivated cancellation of the Oakville power plant, and now we know why. They're burying additional cancellation fees into yet another sole-sourced contract.

Speaker, when will this charade end? Minister, when will we know the true cost of your contemptuous politics?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You know, Speaker, the party opposite supported not moving ahead with the Oakville plant; they supported that. There's a cost to that. So what have we done? We have taken the same-sized plant with the same proponent—it's going to be contributing to the electricity system on an OPG site near Lennox. It's going to mean 600-plus construction jobs, millions of dollars' worth of investment, many permanent jobs and taxes most probably to the local municipality. I think that's good value for the electricity system, good value for the people of Ontario and certainly good value for eastern Ontario.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Acting Premier. Thanksgiving weekend is usually the busiest weekend—the busiest weekend—for students returning home to their families across the province, and definitely so in northern Ontario. ONTC trains and buses on that weekend are now always standing room only. The ONTC, we've just learned, has cancelled the contract to lease four new buses, and the Northlander will no longer be running after September 28, right before the Thanksgiving weekend. Shutting down the Northlander before Thanksgiving will certainly leave some students behind, and it's also not a smart business decision.

With less buses and no train, why does your government want to leave northerners behind?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, I would like to inform the House what the Northlander is costing the people of Ontario. In 2008-09, the subsidy was \$14,568,000; there was a ridership of 34,389 people. In 2009-10, there was a subsidy of \$13.8 million and a ridership of 31,000. In 2010-11, there was a subsidy of \$12.8 million, with a ridership of 34,000 people. In 2011-12, there was a subsidy of \$14.6 million, with a ridership of \$39.9 million. The four-year average per rider is \$395. That's just not sustainable in the present or in the future, so we are going to be putting in a much more effective, efficient transportation system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Acting Premier: The Thanksgiving weekend is the busiest weekend for the Northlander and ONTC buses, okay? Closing the train right before Thanksgiving seems like cruel and unusual punishment. We're not talking about years; we're talking about getting students home for Thanksgiving. Lots of those students, who have never been away from northern Ontario, now are wondering how they're going to get home. As parents, I believe that the members of the government party would understand something like that.

As a show of respect and compassion, will the Acting Premier announce the postponement on the cancellation of our only passenger train until at least after Thanksgiving? Let our kids come home.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I think everyone on both sides of the House realizes that this per-passenger subsidy is just not sustainable.

But you know, Speaker, this government is all about putting students first, so I can assure those students who want to get home that there will be enhanced bus service in place so that no student will be left behind.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources today. Minister, constituents in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East keep telling me how grateful they are to MNR’s firefighters and our first responders who stood on the front lines and dealt with fires this season, working long, hard hours to keep Ontario’s families safe. This is very important to my riding as well, not just in the north, because in my riding we have the Rouge National Park. With this summer’s hot, dry weather, it’s no secret the fire season has been one of the busiest on record—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: We owe a great thanks to all the men and women who keep our families safe during this kind of season.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please refresh for the members of this House and for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and anyone else who wants to engage in your conversation, take it outside.

1130

Ms. Tracy MacCharles:—and for all Ontarians how government ministries came together, working side by side to fight forest fires this summer?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for Pickering–Scarborough East for this really important question. Indeed, we had an extraordinarily busy fire season this year: more than 1,550 fires. To this point, I think our crews have dealt with 350 more fires than last year. The good news, if I can put it that way, is that the total hectares burned was only about one fifth of last year’s amount, and may I say I think that’s largely due to our crews’ ability to keep these fires under control.

We did see some evacuations of more than 600 residents of Sandy Lake, 300 in Kirkland Lake during the very intense spring fire season, and almost 600 in Timmins.

I want to take the time to thank the communities of Thunder Bay, Fort Frances, Kapuskasing, Timmins and Camp Gilla for opening up their homes to those affected during these evacuations. I want to thank the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services; the Red Cross; municipal, First Nations and provincial fire crews; as well as all of our partners for their strong—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It’s very important to emphasize how serious this is. Firefighting is about saving lives. This is so important, and I don’t want to be heckled. It sounds like it was a very busy season, Minister, and it is a reminder of just how dangerous northern Ontario can be, despite its wonderful beauty.

I know your ministry provides regular information to Ontarians that outlines the fire risk levels across different regions, as well as the locations of the fires. This is critical information, Speaker, coordinating efforts between firefighters, ministries, Emergency Management Ontario, municipalities and First Nations to help battle these fires across the north and let Ontarians know where restricted fire zones are in effect.

Minister, can you please tell us about the current fire situation across the province?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks very much again to the member for the question. This summer, I think as most people know, we experienced very hot and very dry conditions across most of the province, which contributed to our higher-than-usual number of fires. Now that temperatures certainly have begun to cool and we have received more rain, the number of fires has been significantly reduced.

I want to also report, Speaker, that we’ve just recently downgraded the fire risk levels across Ontario, and that includes northern Ontario as well. The risk levels are certainly lower than they’ve been for almost all of the summer. As always, though, I remind Ontarians that forest fires are still always possible and prevention continues to be everyone’s responsibility, so let me still caution everyone that we should keep campfires small, never leave them unattended and make sure all fires are put out before leaving the site.

Great thanks to our great firefighters this season. They’ve done a remarkable, remarkable job.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the energy minister. Mr. Speaker, the minister’s failure to provide the documents in committee, combined with his failure to stand up to the Premier, makes him every bit as complicit as his predecessor, the Minister for Economic Development. While the energy minister has spent the weekend negotiating and trying to find a way to salvage his political career, the former Minister of Energy looks focused, well-rested and, according to his tweets, may have won a few bucks on Pro Line this weekend.

One can appreciate the energy minister’s resentment. The second the Liberals were done with their campaign bus, the energy minister was thrown right under it. Will the energy minister stop protecting the Premier’s unaccountable campaign cronies and reveal, who—I want names—made the decision to cancel the two power plants?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, what can I say? The opposition cannot take positive news. The fact of the matter is that a request was made by the committee for certain documents, and all those documents will be made available by lunchtime today.

The Minister of Energy has carried himself with a great deal of integrity. He has worked very, very hard to come to an agreement on the Oakville gas power plant. I think I speak for all members of the House when we find that the vindictive nature of what we're hearing from the Progressive Conservatives is beneath any member of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's time that the opposition apologize. We have complied with what has been asked for by the committee and all documents will be made available by noon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, this marks the one-year anniversary when the Liberal Party announced they were going to cancel the power plants, and the minister is still not calling the shots. He answers to the same people who cancelled the power plants, the same people who put Liberal interests ahead of the interests of the people of the province of Ontario. If this is the Titanic of all Liberal scandals, the one that finally sinks the Premier, surely the Ministers of Municipal Affairs, Economic Development, and Training, Colleges and Universities are safely in a lifeboat while the energy minister stands proudly on the plank, trying not to get his pants wet.

The energy minister has become a fall guy for the Premier's chosen few—too proud to be accountable, too weak to call out the culprits who are raiding the public purse. So I ask the minister: When will he defend himself and reciprocate his colleagues' decision to leave him out in the cold?

Hon. John Milloy: Maybe members want to play a little walk down memory lane. In Hansard, June 1, 2010, the member from Halton: "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them."

The member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant lettered a minister of the day—June 21, 2010: "The potential for future alternate generation in Nanticoke to replace that slated for the proposed and disputed Clarkson plant should receive ample consideration."

The Leader of the Opposition, in the *Globe and Mail*, September 25, 2011: "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga."

Let's go back to the member from Halton—October 19, 2010: "I was pleased when" the Oakville plant "was cancelled."

We can go on and on and on.

CLASS SIZE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Education. The McGuinty government has repeatedly said that its approach to education is all about protecting class sizes. Yet parents of children at Toronto schools are reporting serious problems with overcrowding. At Roden

Public School, new full-day kindergarten classes have nearly 40 students. What does the minister say to parents whose small children actually dread going to school because of the overcrowding that they encounter?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm so proud of our government's investments over nine years in the education system. We have built new schools, we have hundreds of renovations in place and we have worked very closely and very hard. As part of the conversation that we had even this very year with teachers in the education system, we have put a priority on class sizes. We know that those class sizes—that we fund them in a way that allows our boards to keep them small.

Full-day kindergarten that the member opposite mentions—the model that we tried to reach is two adults to 26 children, a 1-to-13 ratio. We know that that allows our youngest learners to get the education, the expertise and the hands-on learning that they need.

I know the member opposite knows that in September we never know how many kids are going to show up in our schools. We find ways to work with our boards to balance that out to ensure that all of our classes are the appropriate sizes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The minister has had years to get this right. The government passed a regulation in June limiting class sizes. It justified cuts to teachers' compensation and benefits by saying they were necessary to keep class sizes small. But now, additional cuts from the last budget are hitting home in the schools, and parents are trying to deal with children who are stressed out by the chaos in the classroom.

What will the minister do about overcrowding of classrooms at Roden Public School and other schools across Ontario?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Leadership is about making decisions that continue to protect the education system. The member opposite and his party would have chosen higher class sizes for increased teacher pay. We need to make those choices and we need to ensure that in each and every situation, we put our kids first.

But as I've said, at the beginning of September every year, we have many, many children who show up for school, and we have seen full-day kindergarten be incredibly popular. But it's really important to remember where we were and where we are now. In 2003-04, 31% of JK to grade 3 classes had 20 or fewer students.

Interjections.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Listen up: Today, 91% of JK to grade 3 classes have 20 students or less. That's an incredible accomplishment.

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to inform the House formally that, pursuant to the motion passed by the estimates committee on May 16, 2012, and the Speaker's ruling on September 13, 2012, officials from the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority will be delivering all records that are re-

sponsive to the motion of May 16, 2012, to the office of the clerk of the Standing Committee on Estimates and the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly by no later than 12 p.m. today. Over the course of four meetings between the three House leaders since the Speaker's ruling, it was ultimately agreed that the only route to satisfying the committee's request and complying with the ruling would be to table all responsive records in advance of the deadline of 6 p.m. today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The third party House leader, the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm just waiting for the mike to get turned on here.

Interjections: It's on.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, it's not. Anyway, the light—somebody should fix the light.

To the government House leader's point that he made just now, I find it rather regrettable—because it's clear that as of last Friday there was an agreement between TCPL and the government. For the government to try to delay this by six weeks and make it look as if there was no agreement tells me that, in fact, they were trying to delay the release of those documents. I think it's most regrettable that the government chose this, because it shows, at the end of the day, that what they were interested in doing was protecting their own hides and not doing what's right for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I am pleased to welcome a friend of mine from Windsor, Jeff Boulton, who is here at Queen's Park today to visit and see the wonderful Legislature that we have. Jeff is the president and executive producer of Dante Media. He is also an advocate for film, television and the arts in the province. He's here in Toronto today promoting that industry, developing deep contacts within southwestern Ontario so that we might see some Canadian-made productions in this province. So I want to welcome him to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you and welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MARIPOSA DAIRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize a local success story from my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Mariposa Dairy of Lindsay was founded by Bruce and Sharon Vandenberg in 1989. The dairy specializes in the production of a variety of goat cheeses which are distributed across Canada and the United States.

Recently, Mariposa Dairy won six prestigious awards at an international conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, in early August. The awards handed out by the American Cheese Society are considered the Academy Awards of the cheese industry.

National and international recognition is nothing new for Mariposa Dairy. Among its many awards and recognitions, it has won previous awards from the American Cheese Society, as well as a top prize at the British Empire Cheese Competition and a regional Ontario Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence in recognition of its outstanding contribution to farming innovation in Ontario.

Mariposa Dairy is a great example of a local company from rural Ontario which has developed high-quality products and a commitment to excellence and has been duly recognized by its national and international peers on numerous occasions.

I want to congratulate Bruce and Sharon Vandenberg and their dedicated staff for being a local success story that we can all be proud of, and encourage you to eat their product at every opportunity. It is more than delicious.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL

Mr. Paul Miller: Last Thursday, it was my immense honour to present 14 extremely deserving individuals from Hamilton and Stoney Creek with the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. With over 200 friends and family in attendance, it was a wonderful opportunity to both show our appreciation and acknowledge the important work that each has done.

Each recipient is distinguished for their community activism and dedication to improving the world around them. The recipients are as follows: Zahid Butt, community activist; John Copland, former city councillor; Colin Heyens, youth humanitarian; Edwin Janack, former family physician; Judy Kloosterman, community organizer; Bill Mahoney, labour activist; Robert McDougall, former volunteer firefighter; Don McLean, Environment Hamilton volunteer; Susan Pretula, school board volunteer; Susan Ramsay, Battlefield House curator; Linda Shuker, Peach Festival president; Heather Slattery, seniors outreach; Josh Tiessen, local artist; Andrew Williams, Boys and Girls Clubs volunteer.

Every one of these exemplary individuals has set the bar high for others in their community. The Diamond Jubilee Medal is a fitting way to thank them for the difference they have made in their community. Congratulations to each well-deserved medal recipient.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL

Mr. Bob Delaney: I, too, have recently presented the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal to some very special community builders in western Mississauga.

Ron Saito and Councillor Pat Saito are Mr. and Mrs. Meadowvale. Pat Saito has spent the last 21 years on Mississauga city council, stewarding northwest Mississauga through its growth and development. Ron Saito is president of Eden Community Food Bank. Since 2009, he has led programs and services to alleviate hunger in western Mississauga.

Audrey Chiang and Judy Yeung, both active with the Mississauga Board of Chinese Professionals and Businesses, have linked Chinese business people with projects to advance the well-being of all Mississauga residents. Through events like the annual Phoenix Ball, Audrey and Judy have raised significant capital and operating money for the Credit Valley Hospital, the Trillium Health Centre and the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care in Mississauga.

Led by Manmohan Singh, the National Association of Indo-Canadians continues to promote art and culture, arrange blood donor clinics, raise food donations and host the wonderful India pavilion at Carassauga.

Finally, Naveed Chaudhry has built and led the Peel Multicultural Council as it has assisted tens of thousands of newcomers to settle and integrate in Mississauga and in Brampton.

Congratulations to our western Mississauga winners of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Today I hand-delivered a letter to the Premier's office regarding this government's fire sale of the Ontario Northland. It offered recommendations based on consultations my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka and I held this past summer. We took the time to travel 1,600 kilometres and visit stakeholders and mayors in seven northern communities. Speaker, we did what the government should have done. We did not take a ready-fire-aim approach to the ONTC, and we didn't throw up our hands like this government did. The message we heard from the stakeholders was loud and clear: Do not sell Ontario Northland's rail freight division.

We believe rail freight is strategically critical infrastructure to economic development and private sector job creation in the north. It must remain publicly owned. How else can we guarantee that the north's minerals and lumber will ever get to market? One stakeholder told us they cancelled a \$10-million expansion this summer because they didn't know if they would have a viable way to ship their products out next year.

Ontario can prosper again, but right now we're heading in the wrong direction, and the ONTC fire sale is proof of that. Urgent action is required to prevent further damage.

TEACHERS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to rise in the House today to share a story of some

students in my riding. In Bramalea-Gore-Malton, students across the riding organized to protest against Bill 115. They had slogans of great unity and solidarity with the teachers. In fact, one of the students quoted in the newspaper stated that the teachers are like family, and an attack against the teachers hurts all of us, particularly the students.

I was very honoured to see students understand the issues and talk about the fact that a reduction in the services provided by teachers is a result of the Liberal government's initiatives, and they stood firmly against Bill 115 and firmly in support of teachers. I was able to attend a number of protests, and I was amazed by the skill and the passion and the organization of the students.

I attended Louise Arbour Secondary School and Harold Brathwaite at Dixie and Sandalwood, as well as Lincoln Alexander and Castlebrooke Secondary School, and I met with students from Brampton secondary school and Sandalwood secondary school who wanted to know more about the issues and understand what Bill 115 was all about. They are planning to have their own rally sometime in the next week.

I'm very honoured and very proud of their work, and I wish students to continue their participation in democracy, to continue these types of peaceful and organized protests to voice their opinion, to voice their expression about what's going on in our education system.

DIALYSIS

Mr. Kim Craiton: As the provincial member of Parliament for the riding of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake, I'm pleased to report on the significant progress of a new dialysis unit in Niagara Falls. After receiving many calls from constituents regarding the progress of this construction, I assisted in planning a tour of what will become our new Niagara Health System satellite dialysis unit.

Construction began on July 7, and work is continuing on the 18,000-square-foot facility, which will be state of the art and will include an elevator to the second floor, security-card access and cameras which will be monitored at the nurses' centre. This is really positive news for patients undergoing kidney treatment in the Niagara Health System's regional kidney care program. Currently patients undergoing dialysis have had to travel to St. Catharines or to Welland.

Once completed, the falls will accommodate 110 dialysis patients. This is long overdue. I'm extremely pleased that the government of Ontario has contributed \$4.7 million in funding to make this happen.

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I also want to thank, in particular, the Greater Niagara General Hospital Foundation; the chair, Ruth Ann Nieuwesteeg; and the executive director, Mike Somerville, for the foundation's pledge to raise \$710,000 to assist with purchasing 21 dialysis machines for the site.

This is great news, and great health news, for the communities in my riding of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie.

CULTURE DAYS

Mr. Michael Harris: Culture Days is a collaborative, Canada-wide volunteer movement to raise the awareness, accessibility, participation and engagement of all Canadians in the cultural life and arts of their communities. Culture Days embrace a core vision that every individual, regardless of age, location or experience, has the right to access and participate actively in culture and the arts.

Launched in 2010, the annual Culture Days event takes place in more than 800 Canadian cities and towns during the last weekend of September. This year, near my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, events include Behind the Scenes of Sleuth, a rare theatre experience, presented by Drayton Entertainment at the St. Jacobs Country Playhouse; a steel pan presentation by Acoustic Steel, showing how these instruments from made, tuned and played, at the Harmonia Centre in Kitchener; and a how-to session that teaches you how to turn wool into yarn at the Joseph Schneider Haus National Historic Site.

I invite all Ontarians to check out their local events and embrace this initiative to share the talents of our communities and deepen connections in our different cultures.

For its third year, Culture Days aims to foster appreciation and support of artistic and cultural life across urban, suburban and rural areas of this province and the country. I hope you all take the chance to participate in this wonderful event.

POLARIS MUSIC PRIZE GALA

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I rise in the House today to talk about the Polaris Music Prize and the importance of the music industry in Ontario. For those of who have not heard about this award, let me give you a few details. The Polaris Music Prize celebrates the creativity and diversity of Canadian recorded music and is presented to the best Canadian album based on artistic merit.

Because the Polaris Music Prize is not based on record sales or musical genre, it is a chance for the Canadian music industry to recognize talented up-and-coming artists who might otherwise go unnoticed. Our government is also committed to supporting these artists.

Music and other entertainment and creative industries play an important role in our province. Not only do they enrich our quality of life; they also help to build our economy. In fact, Mr. Speaker, our entertainment and creative industries support 300,000 jobs for Ontarians and generate over \$12 billion for our economy.

Events such as the Polaris Music Prize gala allow us to celebrate Ontario's talented recording artists and can help promote up-and-coming ones. I look forward to learning who won this year's award.

On behalf of the McGuinty government, I would like to congratulate all the nominees, and I wish the finalists the best of luck at the awards ceremony tonight.

BROCKVILLE AND AREA SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr. Steve Clark: Leeds–Grenville has a proud tradition of sports excellence, and the remarkable athletes, coaches and volunteers with the Brockville and area Special Olympics continue to add new chapters to that rich history. More than three dozen athletes compete year-round in 10 sports, pushing each other to achieve goals and dreams that go far beyond what can be measured by wins and losses.

Recently, the great athletes took to the field for the Special Olympics regional softball qualifier in Brockville. It's the fifth year the city has played host to the tournament, which featured 11 teams and 160 athletes from across Ontario. I'm proud to say our hometown Brockville Islanders stormed to a strong second-place finish and now wait to see if they're invited to next year's provincial championships.

The Islanders clinched second place with a thrilling 19-17 win over Ottawa in the final game. Showing the spirit that's indicative of the team's never-say-die attitude, coach Stu Reid's players rallied to score nine runs in their final at bat to seal the victory.

Speaker, I was honoured to receive this ball, signed by the team, and I want them to know how much it means to me. I'm going to keep it here at Queen's Park, and whenever I feel the odds are against me, I'm going to look at it and think of that great comeback. It reminds me that anything is possible when you keep fighting.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the team and Brockville and area Special Olympics on reminding us what good sportsmanship means.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BREAST CANCER CANCER DU SEIN

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, today we've asked all members to wear pink ribbons to show solidarity with women fighting breast cancer, and we did so today because the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation's pink bus tour has arrived at Queen's Park to showcase the importance of breast cancer screening.

Starting in 2009, the big pink bus has toured across Canada, bringing women in hundreds of communities information on breast health and breast cancer screening. Between 2009 and 2011, the bus received 34,000 visitors.

Here in Ontario, the tour has been raising awareness and encouraging women to sign up for breast screening programs since its launch in May, and will be visiting our communities until October. So far, they have visited 94 communities and have received over 32,000 visitors this year alone. The success of the tour has been made possible by the generous sponsorship of Shoppers and CIBC.

Whether you're a woman yourself or have a wife, mother, sisters or daughters, you likely know someone personally who has been touched by breast cancer. Indeed, just yesterday I attended a wonderful memorial service for my dear friend Ethel LeBlanc, who lost her life to breast cancer.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer and the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in Canadian women. However, we do have one solution we can work toward: earlier detection, which is exactly why the pink bus tour is so important. Women throughout the province need to get information and screening tools early on.

Over the last 20 years, our government has provided funding to Cancer Care Ontario to support the Ontario Breast Screening Program, or OBSP. Regular biannual mammograms are available to all women aged 50 to 74, and as of July 1, 2011, the OBSP was expanded to provide additional breast screening services to women aged 30 to 69 years old who are at high risk of breast cancer due to genetic factors or medical or family history.

High-risk women represent 34,000 lives. These women are two to five times more likely than the general population to develop breast cancer in their lifetime. The newly expanded OBSP now provides these high-risk women with yearly MRI and mammography screening. Research shows that having both screens is the best way to detect breast cancer in women who are at high risk.

Ontario's expanded screening program is not just an investment in our health care system; it's an investment in ourselves and our loved ones. The OBSP provides reminders when you are due for your next mammogram. It coordinates the next steps if you have an abnormal test result. In the last two decades, it has screened over 1.2 million women, a total of 4.1 million screens for women aged 50 and older across Ontario, and these screens detected over 22,000 cancers, the majority in early stages, which helps to improve survival rates. But we have the capacity to do more.

While there's no surefire way to prevent breast cancer, at least not one we've found yet, we can provide women with the tools for regular screening and early detection. That's why we continue to invest in this important program. We've made great progress in reducing wait times for cancer surgeries. Cancer surgery wait times are now 25 days shorter than they were in 2005—I can tell you that one day waiting for that surgery is a lifetime, Speaker—thanks to our investments in the wait times strategy.

As well, Ontario's regional cancer centres play a critically important role in treating those with cancer and making a tremendous difference in the lives of patients and their families. It's thanks to these great programs that the International Cancer Benchmarking Partnership ranks Ontario as among the world's best when it comes to cancer survival rates. That's an amazing accomplishment, one I'm truly proud of.

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Congratulations and thank you to the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and the organizers of this tour.

You're providing a very valuable public service and can take tremendous satisfaction from knowing that you are saving lives.

I encourage all of you to stop by the big pink bus today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's a privilege to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to recognize the phenomenal work of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation. Founded in 1986, the foundation has been a leader in non-profit fundraising, and the pink bus tour is just another example of the foundation's innovative work that's drawing attention to this most worthy cause.

The pink bus will be visiting over 90 communities across the province. I have had the pleasure, even before today, to visit the bus when it was in my home community of Oshawa about two weeks ago, and had the privilege of signing my name. It was difficult to find a spot, with some 30,000 signatures on it, but I was able to find one small spot to put my name.

With one in nine Canadian women diagnosed with breast cancer every year, this is a disease that touches thousands of Ontarians, but Ontarians have responded with energy, commitment and drive. In 2011, 120,000 Ontarians volunteered their time or donated to the foundation. Volunteers from Ontario raised \$20.5 million, contributing \$11.3 million to new grants for research and training fellowships. Clearly, Ontarians have answered the call.

Much has changed since the foundation was established in 1986. Limited screening technology and limited screening programs meant that women were often diagnosed with breast cancer in advanced stages. The treatment options were also limited, and unfortunately, mortality rates were high and the quality of life low for those who suffered from the disease. But since 1986, and in part due to the great work of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, the mortality rate for breast cancer has dropped 35%. Between 1990 and 2007, Ontario's breast cancer mortality rate for women aged 50 to 69 declined by 35%. Today, nearly 88% of women in Ontario diagnosed with breast cancer will survive their diagnosis for at least five years. That's hugely significant, Mr. Speaker.

We've also seen great strides made in surgical techniques. For instance, the chief surgeon at Toronto's Women's College Hospital and the first chair of surgical breast cancer research in Canada, Dr. John Semple, has been a leader in the surgical improvement, performing the first Canadian auto-transplant of lymph nodes in a breast cancer patient.

Undoubtedly, the foundation is making tangible inroads to their mandate of reducing the incidence of breast cancer so that fewer people develop the disease; reducing breast cancer mortality so that more women survive the disease; and improving the quality of life for those diagnosed with breast cancer so that they can live longer and healthier lives.

Not only is the foundation the largest non-governmental funder of breast cancer research, but it funds the

next generation of researchers and clinicians to expand and improve the talent pool so more research and advancements can be achieved. In 2011, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation created 25 new grants and 28 new training fellowships, selecting through rigorous review processes over 100 experts from the medical and research community. Since 1986, the foundation's Ontario region has awarded over \$84 million to fund some 600 grants. These research grants are critical to generating new knowledge and building expertise in the field. It's this research that will allow health care practitioners to better understand and prevent risk factors, improve screening and diagnosis, and improve treatment options.

The foundation has also been a true champion for women all across the province. It wasn't too long ago that breast cancer was a taboo subject, but thanks to the amazing job the foundation has done in generating public awareness through campaigns like the pink bus tour, when we see individuals wearing pink, we often think of the worthy cause it represents. In addition, the foundation has delivered tangible results that will help women across the province and across the country battle this disease.

One example is the courageous work of Jill Anzarut, who challenged the provincial government's stance on Herceptin. Prior to 2011, women diagnosed with HER2-positive breast cancer were only eligible to have OHIP pay for the drug if the tumours were larger than one centimetre. But thanks to the work of Jill and the foundation, OHIP changed its position to cover women with tumours of any size.

There's lots that's going on in all of our communities, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation has done so much to spearhead this work, and I wish them the best of luck as the pink bus tour continues across this province. You're doing great work, really bringing essential information, I would say, to women across the province. It's hoped that, as a result of the work you do, screening and early diagnosis will be increased and more women will live longer and healthier and productive lives.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to add my voice to the great work that the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation is doing, especially today, with the Pink Tour. This great big bus, when it came into Nickel Belt on Saturday, August 25, sure turned a lot of heads. It was big, it was pink, and it is something that everybody had to come and see, including me. We were very well received by a lively group of volunteers who had come out to welcome us on the bus and basically helped us on. We got to visit the bus and learn tons about what breast screening for cancer was all about.

I know that I often talk about parts of our health care system that need improvement, but when it comes to the Ontario Breast Screening Program, this is a program that gets a lot of praise—praise by the women who use it and praise by the health practitioners who refer to the service. This is a program that has helped save many, many lives.

The Pink Tour—that is, the great big pink bus that has toured Ontario—has made a pit stop in 75 communities and reached out to close to 32,000 people so far.

Surprisingly enough, Mr. Speaker, there are quite a few men that come on the bus and want to know more. As was said by the minister and by my colleague, it affects our mothers, our sisters, our aunts and our daughters, and includes men also. So a lot of men wanted to learn more about this wonderful program that we have here in Ontario. I was happy, with the rest of my colleagues, to welcome them to Queen's Park today.

The tour brings information about breast health, about breast screening and how the Ontario Breast Screening Program works. In a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, it works quite well. Basically what they do is they provide screening mammography to women age 50 and over and to a few that meet other criteria, and they will give the results directly to those women.

They allow women to self-refer. Where I live, close to 30,000 people don't have access to primary care, but when it comes to the Ontario Breast Screening Program, they're allowed to self-refer, so they can go even if they don't have a family physician or a nurse practitioner.

Once you have gone to the Ontario Breast Screening Program, they send you reminders so that, two years down the road, you're starting to wonder, "Was it last year?" When it comes to health care, it always seems like, "I just did that, didn't I?" Well, no. If it has been two years, you will get your notice and be reminded that, although it feels like just last month, it was actually two years, and you're due to go again.

If anything shows up at all, they will coordinate the follow-up for women. This is the part that women really, really appreciate. There is a caring that goes with this for everybody who works within the program, who really knows that you're about to tell this woman that there is something wrong with her mammogram. It may not mean anything, but we all think the same thing: If you are the one getting that phone call, you start to sweat it out. There are people at the other end of the line that are trained, that are compassionate and that try to help you through. They will call you back and do further tests. Most of the time, all is good, and you get relief and go back home. If it is not, they will continue to help you transition to whatever care, support and treatment that you need.

They also do a lot to try to reach harder-to-reach populations. They have all of their brochures available in 14 different languages, including aboriginal languages. They come to remote locations, and they really try to reach out.

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The statistics show that there's still some work to be done. Central Toronto, where we see a lot of first-generation immigrants, is one of the lowest—with 60%, on average, of women who should have participated in the Ontario Breast Screening Program actually doing so. That shows that there's still a lot of work to be done.

But here again, I want to congratulate them for the great work that they do.

Ça me fait toujours plaisir de vous parler du bon travail qui est fait par la tournée du gros autobus rose. Il

est gros, il est rose et ça vaut la peine d'aller le voir. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to thank all of the members who spoke for their comments. I would like to thank the visitors who are here, both staff and volunteers, for bringing the big pink bus.

I will leave with one editorial comment: I've been on the bus twice now, once in my riding and once here, and I thank them for the work they're doing for the people of the province of Ontario.

PETITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to read a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. (Hydro One) is proposing construction of a new transformer station on a 100-acre site in Clarington, near the Oshawa-Clarington boundary;

"Whereas the site is on the Oak Ridges moraine/greenbelt;

"Whereas concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of this development, including harm to wildlife as well as contamination of ponds, streams and the underground water supply;

"Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations;

"Whereas most, if not all, residents do not agree this project is needed and that, if proven to be necessary, it could be best accommodated at alternative locations such as Cherrywood or Wesleyville;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Ontario Legislature support the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt and the natural environment at this site. We also ask that the Ontario Legislature require the Clarington transformer station to be built at an alternative location zoned for an industrial facility and selected in accordance with the best planning principles."

I'm pleased to sign this, support this, and present it to Christina, one of the pages.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north's economy; and

"Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

"Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately."

I fully agree, affix my signature, and give it to page Anna.

RADIATION SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is in serious need of modernization;

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is not in harmony with all the following acts, regulations, guidelines and codes: the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario, the radiation protection regulations of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the safety codes of Health Canada and the radiation protection guidelines of the International Commission on Radiological Protection;

"Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by Reza Moridi, the member from Richmond Hill, that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations, make recommendations on how to modernize this act, and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Jasper.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario, mayors and councillors from more than 80 municipalities and Ontario's largest farm organizations and rural stakeholders, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, seek an immediate moratorium on new wind development until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health; and

"Whereas the provincial Liberal government's study back in 2011 failed to conclude anything more than that

it needed to continue to study the turbine sound impacts; and

"Whereas the federal government is launching, through Health Canada, the first comprehensive study of health impacts of wind turbines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government follow the federal lead, accept the objective of the federal wind study, agree and accept that until the study is finished it will not approve any new wind turbine projects in Ontario, effective immediately."

I support this petition and will sign my name to it and send it to the clerks' desk with Maggie.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I agree with this. I will sign my name to it, and give it to page Zakhar.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM OFFICE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: On behalf of my constituents:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario has decided to close the Ontario Disability Support Program office in St. Thomas, an office which serves over 3,245 of our most vulnerable population throughout St. Thomas and Elgin county; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario made this decision without consultation;

"Whereas the majority of clients don't have access to transportation to London to attend appointments with their caseworker, which may result in loss of benefits;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Community and Social Services consult with the city of St. Thomas and Elgin county to

find a solution to keep the ODSP office open in St. Thomas."

I fully agree with this petition as it has no financial implications whatsoever, and I'll hand it over to page Katherine.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children's aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children's aid societies."

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my name to it and give it to page Ethan to take to the clerks.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are risks inherent in the use of ionizing, magnetic and other radiations in medical diagnostic and radiation therapy procedures; and

"Whereas the main piece of legislation governing these activities, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (HARPA), dates from the 1980s; and

"Whereas neither the legislation nor the regulations established under the act have kept pace with the explosion in imaging examinations, including image-guided procedures used in cardiology, radiation therapy, ultrasound, orthopaedics etc.;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish, as soon as possible, a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act to bring it up to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and covers all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I agree with this petition and I will affix my signature.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have many more petitions in support of Bill 9, paved shoulders on provincial highways. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary provincial highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and
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"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's private member's bill provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 9, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincially owned highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

Of course, I support this.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are settled without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents";

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Sashin to bring it to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Auditor General confirmed that no comprehensive evaluation was completed by the McGuinty government on the impact of the billion-dollar commitment of renewable energy on such things as net job losses and future energy prices, which will increase" another "46% over the next five years; and

"Whereas poor decisions by the McGuinty government, such as the Green Energy Act, where Ontario pays up to 80 cents per kilowatt hour for electricity it doesn't

need and then must pay our neighbours to take it for free, and the billion-dollar cost of the seat-saving cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas power plants," have contributed to making Ontario's cost of electricity the highest in North America; and

"Whereas there has been no third party study to look at the health, physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has removed all decision-making powers from the local municipal governments when it comes to the location and size of industrial wind and solar farms;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

I will be passing this off to page Anna, and I agree with the petition.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

I'm signing this on behalf of over 1,000 dogs that have been killed in this province because of the way they look and not what they've done, and I'm going to give it to Caelius—I hope I pronounced that right—to be delivered to the table.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have petitions, Mr. Speaker, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are risks inherent in the use of ionizing, magnetic and other radiations in medical diagnostic and radiation therapy procedures; and

"Whereas the main piece of legislation governing these activities, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (HARPA), dates from the 1980s; and

"Whereas neither the legislation nor the regulations established under the act have kept pace with the explosion in imaging examinations, including image-guided procedures used in cardiology, radiation therapy, ultrasound, orthopaedics etc.;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish, as soon as possible, a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act to bring it up to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and covers all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I fully agree with these petitions, sign them and pass them on to page Leo.

UTILITY TRANSPORTATION VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATV) is legal on schedule 2 highways in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas many residents of Ontario have switched to utility transportation vehicles (UTV); and

"Whereas the use of UTVs in schedule C of the Highway Traffic Act is allowed north of areas in far northern Ontario and unorganized territory....

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario direct the Ministry of Transportation to enact legislation to allow the use of UTVs on class 2 highways throughout northern Ontario."

I fully agree, affix my signature and give it to page Caelius.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY HOMES RENOVATION TAX CREDIT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU LOGEMENT AXÉ SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 19, 2012, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit / *Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts en vue de mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour l'aménagement du logement axé sur le bien-être.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I stand today to speak on the healthy homes renovation tax credit, a credit that, when I look at it on the surface, barely accounts for the taxes this government collects and the HST. Over the past months, I've heard from many people about their concern on the economy and the need to live within our means. This is a quality that was ingrained in rural people across the province—especially, though, when you look around the world, when you see what's happening in Greece, Italy and many other regions who only choose to ignore the warnings and continue to spend out of control.

Mr. Speaker, our Liberal government is following the same path as these financially troubled countries, with continued out-of-control spending, with the misguided belief that they are solving a problem. The Fraser Institute, who identified this government's fiscal record as the second-worst in Canada, has called for a need to be strategic in our spending and not to blindly throw money at problems, hoping that they will go away.

I come from a township that was originally settled by two significant groups of people—first, the Scottish Highlanders, who left their homeland after being forced off their lands, facing starvation, and came to Ontario looking for a better life. They were joined by the United Empire Loyalists, who had fought on the side of the crown in the American Revolution and were stripped of their lands and their possessions and forced to seek a new life as well. They took on the hardships and started from scratch in the wilderness to clear land, plant food, and build a home and the livelihoods of their families.

Once they established the basics of life, they came together as a community to put in place the elements necessary for a safe and growing community. They established schools to educate their young, developed a militia to protect their new homeland, and went on to make major contributions in this country.

My mom's and dad's families were both raised after the turn of the century, going through two major wars where many of their families and neighbours fought and lost their lives for a country they believed in. They went through the Great Depression and learned to look after themselves, not relying on government handouts. Over the past 60 years, people from war-torn Europe came to our area, settling on farms, working hard and following the rules, as they knew that Ontario was the place to make their livelihood. It was a recipe for success, and they have been successful.

Mr. Speaker, these people, who are now our seniors, are not looking for a handout; they are looking for a hand up. They need help in their everyday expenses, which are truly getting out of hand.

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My mother, who is 94, still lives at home and will not benefit from this grant. She is like most other seniors who are just trying to make do without the benefit of large pensions that she contributed to for the public service. She is just trying to cover the increasing demands on her savings: the huge increases in hydro, heating and taxes, and property taxes, with no relief in sight.

This government is making life truly unaffordable for everyone in this province, especially for the seniors. They somehow think that all they have to do is make money available to make the changes to their homes—\$10,000 to get a grant of \$1,500 is barely enough to cover the sales tax. When they can't afford to keep the house, how do you expect them to be able to afford the renovations?

It is a matter of priorities. My riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry lost 3,600 manufacturing jobs before the recession hit, jobs that will never return under the current policies of this Liberal government as they drive up hydro rates to new highs never seen before by this province. The Auditor General's report confirmed what we've been saying all along: The province of Ontario can't afford luxuries such as the Green Energy Act.

I encourage the government to sit down and reflect on the abuses and numerous examples of waste that it has been responsible for. Just since the last election, we have seen many examples of that waste that were skilfully hidden from the public. The Auditor General's report clearly identifies the recklessness of this government, and, to my shock, it even points out that the Samsung contract, one of the major election issues, was awarded without economic evaluation and without cabinet approval.

It appears that decisions are being made on the fly and without regard for the people of Ontario, decisions like the cancellation of the Oakville power plant and the Mississauga power plant after billions of dollars were wasted—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): On a point of order, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Pursuant to standing order 23(b), it doesn't give the member an option. It says that the member shall speak to the topic of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I would ask that the member confine his remarks to Bill 2.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Mr. Speaker, I'm just getting back to the spending of this government as another example of spending we can't afford.

I just talked about the waste, and it took a contempt-of-privilege ruling by the Speaker to finally have documents released. But on the bright side, we are now encouraged. Some real jobs—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member to bring his remarks back to Bill 2. I fail to see how this pertains to Bill 2.

Mr. Jim McDonell: What I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker, is the unaffordability of not only this act, but to the thought that we have seniors who are saying, on one hand that they can't afford—this is a handout to them, but they can't afford the basic necessities.

One of the reasons they can't afford the basic necessities is the example of the hydro bills, which have now doubled under this government's policies. They've made

them unaffordable. I guess the examples I was making through here were some of the reasons why hydro has gotten unaffordable. We've had no regard for the public purse and no regard for the bills. The people of Ontario, and especially the seniors, have limited resources and, in my parents' case, have no pension and now are forced to divvy up, make a decision: "Do I keep the lights on, do I keep the heat on or do I get food on the table?" They're not thinking about, "Do I do renovations?" I think that's the point I was trying to make.

We've made living in Ontario so unaffordable. In rural Ontario we've seen jobs disappear because you can't afford to live in rural Ontario anymore with some of the costs that we're seeing. I think what we want to do is make life affordable and make life the way it used to be in Ontario, where people actually sought out and came here because of the opportunity, because of the thought that if you worked hard, you would get somewhere and have a secure, promising life and a healthy life.

Mr. Bill Walker: Your mum must be very disappointed, Jim.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Oh, I mean—so, as they try to live in their homes these days, there are just too many roadblocks. We see now an attempt by this government to look good, to single out a small group of people that it thinks that, through the title—it will attract a lot of votes in upcoming elections. But, really, when you look at the number of people who can actually afford this legislation—seniors can't afford it, and I think truly the people of Ontario can't afford further expenditures like this. So, really, we're going after the people who probably don't need the help and we're avoiding the people who actually do need the help.

There's little doubt when the loudest voice is asking us to help out. They aren't taking on any special renovations. They aren't talking about basic expenses that everyone else is talking about. They're talking about home heating, hydro costs and property taxes, property taxes that have been driven up by this government's policies back to municipalities. Lack of funding—as mayor in South Glengarry, we are receiving less funding from the province than we did in the year 2000.

I know there has been much inflation in this province over the last 10 years, but there has been no help back. The federal Conservative government has given gas tax back to the rural areas. We haven't seen any initiatives by this government to help out anybody but the larger cities that have transit. I think we must go back to our roots. The vast majority of the municipalities of Ontario have no transit so have no access to some of these funds that they're so very proud to talk about. I think that it's time to get back and look at the people of Ontario—making life so it's affordable. If you work hard, follow the rules, you will be successful.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk against this bill. I encourage this government to look back and start to do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. As I listened, there was very little substance to the actual bill itself and a lot more discussion about perhaps what the government was doing wrong.

He started off by prefacing his remarks by reminding that this government is following the same path as that which was followed in Greece and Italy. On that, I must tell him that his history and his knowledge of world affairs is not entirely accurate, because if you look at those two countries and the problems they are having, they both had right-wing governments. They both had governments that cut taxes to the point that they couldn't afford the programs. They both had governments that made it very possible for the 1% to evade taxes altogether so that the 99% couldn't possibly cover what needed to be done. Those are the problems of both Italy and Greece today and probably of Spain and Portugal as well.

I think we need to be accurate here. We need to say that if this government is at fault—and they're at fault for many things. I'm not going to be here to tell them they're perfect, because they are not. But one of them is not kowtowing to what the Conservatives are asking for, which is additional tax cuts because, if there is a recipe for disaster, if there is a recipe to take Ontario down that road, it will be what they are recommending, and it will be following what has happened, unfortunately, in Greece and Italy and some other countries.

Mr. Speaker, I also think we need to say, from our party, that this bill has many flaws, but it is a bill that is going to help a certain very small percentage of seniors to stay in their homes. New Democrats will be supporting it. This is now day nine or 10. I think it's time we got on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I want to acknowledge my honourable colleague from Beaches–East York because I, too, am confused about what the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry was talking about. I'm not even sure he was talking about the bill, Speaker. In terms of the tax burden, which somehow he was trying to tie to this bill, I just want to mention to my honourable colleague of the opposition that the tax burden is the lowest in the Great Lakes and Midwestern states and provinces. So if he's saying that things aren't affordable here, I would like to know where he thinks it's more affordable.

1400

Anyway, I want to get back to the bill. This is probably my last opportunity to speak to the bill. Speaker, you know what? This bill came home to me when I hosted a seniors' expo in my riding last weekend, with, I might add, a federal member of a different party than my own. We did this in a non-partisan way. I had seniors in for a seminar on tax credits, all the wonderful tax credits we offer. I've spoken before about the many wonderful tax credits in Ontario for seniors, but do you know what struck me about this bill? This bill provides for seniors to

apply every year. It will be permanent. It's not that you have to spend \$10,000 in one year and that's it. You could do handrails one year; you could do a ramp another year. I heard members from the third party talk disparagingly about the importance of ramps for seniors. I can't say more strongly than this that it is important that we help seniors have improved accessibility, independence and quality of life in their homes.

I'm very proud of this bill, Speaker, and I look forward to supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have a moment to comment on the speech from the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry on Bill 2. Of course, Bill 2 is talking about a very minor tax credit they called the healthy homes renovation tax credit. I find it interesting, as I'm sitting here and reading some of my invitations. I have one from the District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board, and they want to meet with me because of changes to provincial funding for housing and homelessness. Whereas the bill we're talking about is a very minor tax credit, it seems that they're passing a resolution. I'll go through it:

"Whereas the province has discontinued funding for programs that have supported individuals and families who are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, which includes the Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program....

"And whereas the recently announced homelessness program funding has been allocated in an amount that will allow for a funding level of approximately 35% of the previous average annual funding;

"And whereas this reduction in program funding creates hardship for our most vulnerable community members and is in contradiction to the Housing First principle of sustainable communities;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the province commit to an annual funding level for the district of Parry Sound that, at a minimum, matches the total amount of funding that was previously given to now-discontinued annual programs, and at a level that reflects the needs of our communities...."

Here we are debating this Bill 2, which is—some in our caucus have described it as being a fluff bill; it's so narrowly scoped that you have to have a lot of money to be able to spend to get a very minor benefit, yet I'm being requested for a meeting from the District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board because of real changes to our most vulnerable. So I just wonder where this government's priorities are and if this bill is more about winning votes and fluff than it is about addressing real concerns in the community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: All I can say is, this is another one of the prop-up-a-Liberal bills. That's all this is. Speaker, I don't care if it's a \$500 or \$10,000 credit. It doesn't matter, because the people in my riding—21% of them

are living below the poverty level. They can't pay their rent. They can't pay their hydro. They can't pay for food. They don't care about ramps and hand bars, because they can't even afford it. It's not even in their budget.

The last bill they had was a doozer. They were going to give them 50 bucks off their registration for sports, or 75 bucks off that. Speaker, when I played hockey—and that's years ago, and still up until a few years ago I was playing competitive hockey—that would pay for maybe five skate sharpenings in a season. What is that? That is absolutely useless. In fact, it's an insult. If you want to do something for sports, let them write off their registration fee. Take the HST off their registration fee, because some of these kids have got to pay \$800 to play hockey. I've got kids who can't even afford skates in my riding, and they're going to give them 50 bucks off. It's absolutely, absolutely useless.

And \$10,000—who's got that? Not only do you have to pay the HST on the \$10,000; you've got to pay for all the guys who do the work on top of that; the tax on top of that. You end up losing money, not saving any money. They say that you don't have to use the \$10,000. I've got people who can't use the first 100 bucks. So, really, this is just another elect-a-Liberal bill. All they do is for promotion. That's all it is: It's self-promotion. It's absolutely an insult to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We go back to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for his reply.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank my colleagues who spoke to the bill.

I thank the member for Beaches–East York. He talks about the European countries. These are countries that are examples of where they drove up pensions and benefits so high that the economy there couldn't support them. That's what we're talking about. We're driving up public spending to a point that we can't support it.

My colleague from Pickering–Scarborough, I guess, seemed to be somewhat confused, because a report from a couple of weeks ago talked about Ontario's income taxes now being the highest in Canada. If they're the highest in Canada, I'm sure they are the highest in North America. I know our hydro rates are the highest in North America. Our property taxes are the highest in Canada, so again, I'm sure they're the highest in North America. So we're looking at not being competitive. When you take your basic inputs and you're that far out of whack, you are no longer competitive.

The 2% that this bill is giving out over what the HST is—you know, you're talking somebody getting \$200 back on a \$10,000 bill, which is not all that much when you're looking at them—because the member over here is talking about how they can't afford to put food on the table. The member from Parry Sound talked about people's homelessness and getting letters from people needing help. There's an article in the *Standard Freeholder* this week: The food bank shelves are empty. They've never had such demand. These are people who

can't afford to pay for food, and now they're not likely going to be in a situation where they can take advantage of this bill. The costs are putting them out of their homes, and they are looking—they'd find a long-term bed, but there's none of those either, so they're forced to go without help.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I see, is coming over to our side—so a realization of what's going on.

But I think we just have to get back to reality and look at what the spending—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate? Member for Whitby–Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that we are nearing the end of our time for debate on Bill 2, the healthy homes renovation tax credit. I just have a few comments to make.

Of course, it was created to assist seniors 65 years or older on qualified home improvements to assist in access and mobility or functionality. This would allow up to 15% on expenditures over \$10,000 a year.

Well, a number of people have already commented on this. If you are wealthy, you can afford to do these renovations, whether there's a tax credit there or not. But the reality is that many people in many of our ridings don't have that kind of spare cash lying around to put into these kinds of improvements. Of course they are worthwhile, but when you talk to seniors about really what's most important to them—and I did have the opportunity to attend a seniors' forum in my riding that the federal member set up several weeks ago—that's not what you're hearing about. Doing home renovations is not what's top of their list; it's being able to stay in their own homes. It's being able to pay their property taxes, being able to pay their heating bills, being able to keep up with the cost of living, and being able to get the kind of health care that they need. I'd like to spend a few minutes just speaking about that.

The sad reality right now is that our seniors are not being treated very well. Up to 25% of all the beds in most of our hospitals across southern Ontario right now are being used by people who are unfortunately called bed blockers. Those people are mostly seniors and it's a very insulting term to use for them, but the reality is that they are there in the hospital, where they don't need to be, simply because they are waiting for an alternate-level-of-care placement, whether that's going back into their home community or whether that's going to a long-term-care facility. I know that people want to be back in their own homes. In some cases they can; in some cases they do need more assistance and support and they do need to go to a long-term-care facility. But I can say, certainly in my riding of Whitby–Oshawa, those placements are few and far between. We have a situation where people are having to go to different jurisdictions. Some people are having to go to Scarborough. Some people are going as far east as Cobourg, and north as well. It puts a tremendous strain on the family. If the spouse is around, it

means the spouse has to travel a long distance to see the spouse who is located in a different community. And as you get older, it's very destabilizing and confusing to have to go and live in a place very far away from your own home.

1410

The real kicker, I think, is the fact that we really have not made the investments in home care that we need in order to allow seniors to be able to stay in their own homes for as long as possible.

I was taking a look at some of the statistics, reading over an excellent paper that the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario just released on Enhancing Community Care for Ontarians, their ECCO plan. It has some really interesting statistics in it about where we are in the province of Ontario and what we're spending money on.

Right now, we spend almost 35% of our health care budget on hospitals, but only 7.7% goes into long-term care. Even more shockingly, only 6% goes into home care, so we really have a lot of work to do. That is what I'm hearing from seniors in our communities.

To be able to keep someone in their own home is 67% less than a long-term-care spot and 95% less than the average stay in a hospital. We're talking about not only major savings but also major comfort of life and quality of life for people. Of course, people want to stay in surroundings that are comfortable and familiar to them, and we need to make sure that we can get out there and be able to do it.

I've heard from many people in my home community—where there's a husband and wife, both in their 90s. The husband has had some significant health care problems in the last few years, yet when home care comes in, they tell his wife that she should be able to lift him and bathe him and do all of those things. It's ridiculous to assume that a 92-year-old woman is going to be able to do that.

Similarly, it seems that once the budget runs out, there's no help to be had. If you need home care help from April 1—because we run on a fiscal year that ends as of March 31. If you end up in the first part of April and you need home care, you're probably going to get it. But if you happen to need home care at the end of February or the first part of March, I know what people in my riding are hearing very often: They're hearing that there's no money left. Whether you come home and you need assistance in bathing, in light housekeeping, you may need some physiotherapy assistance or even some nursing care, you're going to find that that's not going to be there for you. Those are the kinds of things that I hear from seniors in my riding.

We've also heard, "Can we afford this or not?" I think it's a question of priorities. We can afford the things that are really, really most important. What we see from this government is a government that consistently spends money on things that we don't really need. Sure, there are things we'd like to be able to have, but if we haven't been able to cover the bases and cover the most essential costs, then we shouldn't be spending money on some of these other things—just to attract votes, I suppose.

We need to take a look at all of this in the context of the economic situation that Ontario is in right now, where we have something that's approaching a \$300-billion debt. We have a deficit right now of \$15 billion—and as we saw from Mr. Drummond's report that was released some months ago, if we don't take some fairly drastic and significant action, we're going to have a deficit approaching \$30 billion by this time next year.

When we compare this healthy homes renovation tax credit against all of those needs and all of those priorities, you have to wonder: Why is this government moving forward with this? As other speakers have suggested, I really do think that this is an insult to the people of Ontario, particularly to our seniors, because we know that so much more needs to be done. We know that we need to get our costs under control; and we know that, right now, we're spending more on interest payments to service our deficit—and our debt—than we are on any other ministry except for health care and education. Imagine that: That's the third-largest expenditure of government.

If we don't change things, we're not going to be able to continue to spend money on things we consider important, like post-secondary education, like infrastructure, like our justice system—and I certainly hear a lot about how our courts aren't adequately resourced, how we need legal aid to be expanded. All of these are things that we want to be able to have but we can't unless we prioritize our spending.

Certainly that's something that Mr. Drummond talked a lot about. He made a number of recommendations for health care reform, too, that I read with interest since I'm our party's health care critic—very few of which have been actually put into place. In fact, some have seemingly been ignored and actually the government seems to be taking the opposite direction.

We've got scandals where we've seen money spent—like the Ornge air ambulance scandal, where we've seen potentially hundreds of millions of dollars wasted. We've got the whole energy fiasco with the power plants in both Mississauga and Oakville, where we've seen \$190 million wasted with respect to one of those plants. And who knows? We're still waiting to get the documents to tally up the amounts on the other power plant. But again, this is a government that has the seat-saver program in effect, and they're willing to spend whatever money they need to spend in order to continue to stay in power.

What I'd really like to see us focus on is the things that are most important: How do we make sure that our senior citizens are properly cared for? How do we make sure that our most vulnerable citizens are cared for? We had the honour of debating private members' resolutions last week where we talked about developing a select committee to prepare a developmental services strategy—because we have so many people in our communities who have developmental challenges or who are dually diagnosed with a developmental disability and a mental illness. We really need to focus on them. People with mental health and addictions issues: We already had

a select committee that came up with a number of quite reasonable recommendations, I believe. The government has only acted on one or two of them. There's a lot of work that has yet to be done. Again, we need to take a look at those people and what we can do to support them.

We need to focus on things like post-secondary education in order to be able to transform our economy and move from a manufacturing-based economy into a knowledge-based economy. That means it's going to be all the more important to continue to make post-secondary investments. We're really not hearing much about that. We also need to boost our productivity and innovation agenda. I know that the Premier now has a council that he's appointed. We've heard very little about the work that they're doing, but that's something that we really need to do in order to boost the output economically of this province so that we can continue to prepare and provide the supports that we need in all of our communities.

I'm not going to take any more time. I do really appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 2 and I look forward to hearing any questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to join the debate on the healthy homes tax credit. We've certainly been debating this for a long time, but I agree with my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa, who said that this bill is mostly going to support the very wealthiest citizens of Ontario—and that's problematic. I think the intention of the bill is wise in that it identifies a real issue. Seniors in Ontario are struggling. Their bills are going up; they can't pay them, whether that's property taxes and the results of downloading in this province or the fact that this government has taken the HST and placed it on the backs of seniors who are trying to pay for their heating costs. We know this government's record when it comes to cancelling the retrofits, the tax credits available to actually save energy costs for seniors here. People are spending a fortune in this cold, cold climate to heat their homes.

We desperately need to support seniors across this province and in my riding of Davenport, but the prescription is wrong—the giveaways, the huge corporate tax cuts—and then it comes back to low-income seniors, people who worked their whole lives and who have to pay more.

This bill will work very well in places like Forest Hill and Rosedale; it doesn't work so well in Davenport. It does a little bit, and for that I need to support it, but it doesn't go nearly far enough and it's not going to deliver the kind of income support that seniors need to make their lives more affordable and allow them to live their last years with the kind of respect and dignity that I believe they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 2, the healthy homes renovation tax credit.

I've heard members from the opposition speak now at some length on this. I understand that what they're saying is that it's not enough. I think any bill that comes forward before the House generally goes some way towards solving a problem, and there are things that are left for another day, often. This perhaps is an example of that.

But certainly, if you're a person who is aging in their house, aging in the community, if you've got a mother or a father or a grandfather or a grandmother who needs to do something to the house that enables them to stay in their house—very simple, practical things. It could be something like putting handrails in the corridors. It could be certain grab rails in the bathroom. They're very practical things that, as we get older, we find we need to stay in our house. What this does is it allows those people to make that purchase, knowing that they'll get some of it back from the government at some point in time when they file their income tax form. That to me is very practical help, and it doesn't only apply to the persons themselves. If you're a caregiver, if it's for your mother or for your father, you can invest that money as well. You can make those changes to the house as well.

1420

So it strikes me as maybe not being enough for everybody in the House. I think that's true of just about any bill we have before us. But I think, on balance, if you look at it, this will be of assistance to people in the province of Ontario. To hold it up simply because you feel it's not enough, to deprive those seniors who could avail themselves and could have availed themselves of this earlier in the year, just out of what appears to be spite or what appears to be just outright opposition for the sake of opposition, seems to be something that's very mean-spirited and something that these guys might want to think about a little bit in the future. There are people who could use this today. Pass this bill so they can start using it. We'll move on in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I thought that the member from Whitby—Oshawa talked with great insight into this bill and the reasons behind it. She talked about some of the bed-blockers that are there. Because of the shortages in health care, there's no place for our seniors to go, and they're holding up expensive beds in the hospital.

I'll tell you a story. A couple of weeks ago, a resident came into my office. She had a mother who was finally sent home, and she was unable to be at home. There was not enough home care to keep her there. Her daughter was up from California, on the verge of losing her job—she couldn't leave because there were no facilities, no beds for her. This was truly a case where she would be unemployed if she had to stay. She had no alternatives anymore, and I think that's what we're running into. We're running into a group of people who are left with no alternatives. The government can't afford to pay for services to keep them at home, even though there's a huge savings in doing that. But now they're concentra-

ting on something that benefits 1% of the population. I think we've got to look back at the basics, back at getting our services or priorities that we need. As we drive up our debt rates, the interest is getting out of hand.

I think, as the member from Oakville says, we're not getting our priorities right. I think you have to look at what really is needed here and not just some window dressing that looks like they're attending to the seniors of Ontario. They're not, because they don't even realize what their needs are. They're not very dissimilar from the rest of the province; it's just trying to get a good job and being able to pay their bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate today. I thank the member for Whitby-Oshawa for her commentary.

I listened intently to the member from Oakville, who gave quite a good assessment of this bill. He acknowledged quite clearly that it only goes so far in terms of addressing the problem of keeping seniors in their homes and that the government is limited to so much to be able to facilitate that. Ultimately, this bill offers \$1,500 to keep a person in their house, where the Liberal Party and the Liberal government spent millions of dollars to keep that member in this House—unbelievable. It pales in comparison. If you look at the amount that was spent on the Mississauga—

Interjection: Hundreds of millions.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Hundreds of millions of dollars—we're going to find out later on, probably tomorrow—to keep one member in this House. Yet when it comes to the seniors in our province, those who built the country, those who worked day in and day out, those who have modest means, who have seen their pensions vaporize, who have seen their jobs being outsourced, offshored, downgraded, off to the lowest-wage jurisdictions on the planet because of free trade agreements that both Liberals and Conservatives, federally and provincially, have promoted—I'm bringing you guys into this as well. You aren't building a sustainable economy—you haven't for decades in this province. But when the money is needed to keep a member in their seat, in this House, the funds are unlimited.

Interjection: One per cent.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The funds are unlimited for the 1% here.

Mr. Speaker, I know the challenges that seniors face and I know the challenges that those who have physical disabilities face to have their homes be accessible, and the costs that are associated with those retrofits. I also know that this bill doesn't go far enough.

There are other jurisdictions like Quebec that will offer up to \$5,000 as matching funds for those types of upgrades. We have areas that show us how it can be done, but this is certainly not going far enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Whitby-Oshawa has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would like to thank the members from Davenport, Oakville, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and Essex for their comments.

I did listen quite intently to all of the comments, and I did note the comments from the member from Oakville that it didn't go far enough, that there's always more that we can do and that sometimes you have to do things incrementally. I would agree, if that's of significant benefit. But in the present case, I would suggest that there is very little benefit to be gained by this because when you talk to people in your community, I can tell you, I have never had anybody come and tell me, "Boy, I wish I could get some of these home renovations done so I could stay in my house." Sure, some of them, they'd like to be able to do, but they know they can't afford it. What's more important to them is to be able to get the health care services that they need in order to be able to stay in their own home. I did speak earlier about the lack of long-term-care facilities in many of our communities and the lack of home care programs.

I think the other thing that we need to turn our sights to is looking at how we can keep people in their own homes and not go through this revolving door of hospitalizations where they get stabilized, they go back into their own homes, they don't have the services that they need in their own home to be able to stay well and they end up being readmitted to hospital. Unfortunately, this plays out time and time again in our community, and I think we really need to take a look at some of the really innovative approaches that are happening.

I know that there is a program that's being developed from Women's College Hospital—they are coordinating it—where they have a matrix that if somebody meets certain criteria: they're frail, elderly or whatever when they're discharged from hospital, they get followed in the community for a period of six weeks to make sure that they stay well, that they get the rehab, nursing and other home care services that they need. They found that to be remarkably successful. This is what we really need to do in order to properly support seniors in their own homes, and this I would suggest would be a more proper use of public funds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I wish to inform the members of the House that I have received a deferral note signed by the chief government whip, and that means, of course, that this vote will take place tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(AIR AMBULANCES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES
(SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 20, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 50? The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure—I prepared for days to speak on this motion; I'm well prepared. Just to make sure that I'm very clear, I think this whole thing about the air ambulance—we've talked at—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I've recognized the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, but I have been reminded by the table that you have already spoken to second reading of this bill. As a result, we've already heard your comments and thoughts.

I will once again ask: Further debate on Bill 50? The member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

1430

Mr. Jim McDonell: I just received a pass from my member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Once again, I apologize. I've been advised that the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry has already spoken to Bill 50 at second reading.

Further debate? The member for Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Have I spoken on it, too? Okay. I don't remember, honestly. It was such a memorable bill, I don't remember.

But anyway, Bill 50—why the government has called Bill 50. I think it was the ambulance act, if I remember right, the ambulance chasers' act. We think there's going to be a need for this because of Ornge, the scandal that's arisen because of Ornge. We need to do something in this province because of Ornge. With the money that's been wasted on Ornge, there's a scandal. We've called for an all-party select committee on Ornge, which would alleviate some of this kind of criteria for the scandal that led to the money that was wasted on Ornge.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this bill being called at the last moment is—okay, another copy? We're still on second reading, it says here.

Anyway, this bill was called, and we've called for an all-party select committee on Ornge. It's been proven in the finance committee—led by our chairperson very ably, and of course the member from Newmarket-Aurora, who has made the case that there would be a need for an all-party committee because of the spending and the scandals and the witnesses who were called. Anyone who's had the opportunity to watch that committee in the House

will know that this committee should be struck because this Ornge whistle-blower contract—the people who come in to testify before committee, then given suspensions, terminated from their jobs. So, obviously, we need something that would prevent this from happening in the future.

The all-party select committee that we have called for continually—the government has tried to say that we've been delaying the debate on this side of the House, but what we've called for, as members of the press have also called for—and members in the third party as well have called for the all-party committee so we could move this forward and try and prevent this type of waste.

It's about the 26 deaths, too. I think, as the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—I heard you speak about it one time. I think you talked to it a number of times, where you talked about the 26 deaths that the coroner's office has been asked to look into, Mr. Speaker. So I think it's important that, as we move forward, we try and prevent this type of incident from happening again.

Members on this side of the House—I know there's been a number of speakers who have risen at different times to speak to this. I think it's incumbent upon us as we move forward on this that we have opportunities in this House to debate this issue, to move forward and look at opportunities that we could prevent this type of thing from happening again, because it's a terrible waste of resources in the province. We know the former chief executive who was being paid, I think the number was—I'm going all from memory here, Mr. Speaker—approximately \$1.4 million, and this was not money well spent, as the board was forced to terminate him. A number of other executives have also exited the Ornge corporation because it was shown that money was ill spent. A number of poor decisions were made at that time, and as we go forward, we need to prevent these types of things from happening again. There was no oversight. We've called for the Minister of Health also to resign. She's resisted that.

I think this is the next big scandal that's facing this government. We're moving forward right now on the OPG, with the Oakville power plant and also the opportunity to look into the Mississauga gas plant. Those papers, I understand, have been released today—thousands of pages of paper and documents. We'll see if there was a number of redactions done. I haven't had an opportunity to see those documents myself yet, but I know that members of our staff and also colleagues from the energy critic's role will be looking at those papers at this time, right now. I think it's going to be an unheard-of debate going tomorrow with the contempt motion that's going to be moved, it's my understanding tomorrow, in this House. Mr. Speaker, it's certainly unheard of in our time here in the House.

We've called for, in this House, whistle-blower protection every week, Mr. Speaker, and that's because of the treatment that a number of witnesses that appeared before that committee received, or a number of witnesses

that have also, in confidence, talked to us and said that they were conscious about coming forward, had concerns about stepping forward to testify to incidences they know have taken place at Ornge because of the opportunities that they may face as well—the incidents that could be also detrimental to their careers.

We talked about the costs of Ornge, millions and millions of dollars that were wasted that could have gone into front-line health care. We just had a debate that finished a few minutes ago about keeping seniors in their homes. How far would those millions of dollars have gone to keeping their seniors in their homes? How much would it have done for front-line health care as well to hire more nurses, more specialists to treat people, pharmacists? How much would this money have done to help pharmacists in supplying—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, they've cut the pharmacare; that's right. We could have put this money into pharmacare and helped the people. There's also millions and millions of dollars wasted on this thing. As my friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound will say, billions of dollars wasted by this government.

We call Bill 50, at the end of the day—it's too little too late. If this government was doing its job, if this Minister of Health and her department, the bureaucrats, were doing their job and doing the proper oversight, we wouldn't have been in this position. We wouldn't have to call for an all-party select committee to study the incidences of waste at Ornge. We want to get to the bottom of what took place at Ornge, and the only way we're going to do that is if we have an all-party select committee where we can take a look at whistle-blower protection, we can take a look at the cost of the waste in that department, and we can also try and prevent these types of incidences from happening in the future.

It's my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that this will be finished being debated today and further assist—the Minister of Health herself, in this House—I was here that day—said she would appear, but if it was the will of the House, and she would not restrict us from calling a select committee.

Well, the Premier refused to appear at the committee. That's another thing that happened in this House. The Premier was offered the opportunity to come and appear before the committee. He refused to do that. I don't know why. I think he was doing a photo op that day in some school.

He doesn't go to schools now. I don't know why. At the time, he was going to empty schools all summer. Now that schools are back, he's chosen not to go to any more schools. I don't know. Maybe he doesn't think he'll get a warm welcome there. But anyway, he appeared in a number of schools over the summer, and then after the by-elections in Kitchener–Waterloo and Vaughan, he's chosen to go to other places now for his photo ops.

There's nothing in this bill, Mr. Speaker, to ensure accountability. That's another issue that we've got big concerns about: accountability. This government is

famous for a lack of accountability. It's not the first time. They've been in power for almost nine years now. I've been watching this government—

Mr. Bill Walker: Too long.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Too long. As my colleague from Bruce says, too long, nine years too long. I remember I was a candidate in the 2007 election and we were talking—

Mr. Bill Walker: A fine candidate.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound says, “A fine candidate.” I'll leave that to others to decide.

I see we're joined by the member from Thornhill. Thank you for joining us today.

Interjection: The esteemed member of Thornhill.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The esteemed member from Thornhill has joined us as well in the House. He's going to comment on this bill, I'm sure, in a few minutes.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, we're concerned about the issues of accountability. We're concerned about the appearances of waste and costs. We say the bill is too little too late. We're agreed on this side of the House.

I know the House leader always likes to say that the committee or some part of the House is seized. I think it's their thinking that's seized. He always says they're seized, the committee is seized.

They haven't got any committees appointed. That's another issue we've got, that we need to get these committees stricken—stricken, if that's a word?

Interjection: Stroked.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Anyway, we need to get these committees in place so that we can do the business of the House, move the issues forward as far as accountability, deal with a bill like Bill 50 and not be caught at the last moment with no notice of what's going to be debated in the House, as it's very difficult to rise and speak, as you might witness in this place.

1440

I can hardly wait to get another chance to get up and speak on this. I look forward to the rest of the debate and the rest of the afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I first would like to compliment the member from Sarnia–Lambton for his ability to jump in when he wasn't even scheduled to speak. He adapted quite well very quickly to this horrendous situation with this Ornge situation.

Speaker, the bottom line here is that we all in this House are aware of what happened. We're aware of the money that was wasted by individuals who were in control of the purse strings at Ornge. We're also aware of the lack of accountability and governance by the Liberal Party. The minister was well aware, according to Mr. Mazza, of what was going on and did nothing about it until it hit the papers. That's unfortunate.

Accountability is important here. There was a lack of accountability on all sides, from the people who are being paid by the government to do the job and from the

government that oversees that job. Nobody stepped up to the plate until it hit the papers and became an unfortunate situation. Now the government is jumping up and saying, "We want accountability, and everyone's going to play by the new set of rules." I certainly hope that happens, because we cannot afford to have any more hundreds of millions of dollars of bungs that have gone on.

Some of the stuff that went on—how could anyone not trace the fact that this individual had bought a condo in Florida and a speedboat? This reminds me of the Hydro One days, when the woman had a yacht named after herself under a certain government at the time. She has probably changed occupations since then. I don't know if she has found a new way to raise funds, but that was quite interesting.

All I can say is, it's about time we had some accountability. But like I've said ever since I've been here, it's called enforcement. If you don't enforce the rules, if you don't show the public that you're serious about watching their dollars, then nothing is going to happen. You've got to follow through.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the member from Sarnia-Lambton, who I do agree scurried around and did manage to actually speak about the bill at hand.

One of the things that the member mentioned was the desire of the opposition to have a select committee struck on the subject of Ornge air ambulance. Of course, as those who have been following this will know, what has happened is, there have been extensive hearings on this issue at public accounts. I must note that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has actually appeared at public accounts three times. In addition, former Ministers of Health who were Liberal ministers—Minister Caplan, Minister Smitherman—have appeared before the committee. Of course, the one who didn't appear was Minister Clement.

Some interesting documents have been tabled; for example, the minutes of a meeting which happened on September 4, 2003, which, for those of you who might have lost track, was right at the beginning of the election campaign. This was a meeting that was chaired by the then-Assistant Deputy Minister of Health on behalf of Minister Clement and his associate minister, Mr. Newman. The direction that was given at this meeting—not by Liberal ministers; by Tory ministers—was that, "Chris Mazza is charged by the deputy minister and the ADM to produce an assessment of how"—that is, creating Ornge—is accomplished. It goes on to say, "Dr. Mazza will lead this project and is to have the co-operation and assistance of the emergency health services branch." The direction, in fact, came from the Conservative government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I think the member from Sarnia-Lambton did a terrific job of indicating our con-

cerns with respect to Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act, which of course was hastily written following the Ornge air ambulance scandal.

We've heard numerous references that have been made by the House leader, by the Minister of Health and even by the Premier to the number of witnesses that have already been heard from in public accounts and the length of time that we've spent on it and so on. But the fact remains that we still don't really know what happened at Ornge. There are still many more questions than answers. And so I would say to the government members: How can you possibly expect to come up with a piece of legislation that's going to correct a problem when you don't even know yet what the problem is? And that's what Bill 50 is purporting to do.

We still have a lot of issues that we need to deal with in public accounts, situations where the evidence that has been given by the Minister of Health is certainly at odds with the evidence given by some of the other witnesses. We've also asked for the Premier to come and give evidence before public accounts.

We've had situations where witnesses have come forward, and I would raise the issue with respect to Mr. Bruce Wade, who was a helicopter pilot from Thunder Bay who came and gave evidence before public accounts. Shortly after he did that, he was suspended. And this is by the new regime; this isn't by the old board. This isn't anything that happened before December. This is the new group of people. He was suspended. We still don't really know why. He was reinstated in early September, I believe, and he has subsequently been suspended again. So there's something very funny going on there that we really need to get to the bottom of.

We won't be able to do that until we get the committee structures up and running again. We need to get public accounts as well as all of the other committees up and running so that we can get to the bottom of this and understand what we should be doing with Bill 50, how we should strengthen it to make sure this never happens again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand and speak to this issue on behalf of my constituents. Speaker, what this province needs and what this government actually needs is to restore public faith to our institutions, and Bill 50 does not do enough to do that. Bill 50 comes too little, too late. We've seen the kind of corruption, the crookedness in this government, and we know that the air ambulance service in this province will never go without scrutiny again, because people know the degree of corruption that's happened there before. But it still does not go far enough. This bill does not bring in whistleblower protection. It doesn't bring in Ombudsman oversight. We need this government to stand up and do the right thing. They actually had the tools. They could have done this. The NDP was blowing the whistle two years ago on this, and still the government refused to look at it.

How do we restore voter confidence? When we see billions of dollars wasted on eHealth, when we see millions of dollars given away to insiders, when the Premier won't come before committee and testify, when documents aren't produced when they are requested, it's easy to lose faith in this process. We had to call the OPP in to investigate this.

What we also see is that this government has not learned from its past experience. They continue to give away their power to their own friends, their own interests. They continue to privatize, just as they did in this case, to put profit before people when it comes to our health care. Now they're doing it in our transportation systems, where our northern friends won't be able to get home because they've given away their public transit service to private operators, and they are about to do it for transit in this city as well.

On every file that comes forward, we continue to hear scathing reviews of this government and the fact that there's not proper oversight. There's no accountability here.

It's time to go. It's time to get a new government here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time that we have for questions and comments. I now return to the member for Sarnia-Lambton for his reply.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank, at the outset, the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and my colleagues from Guelph, Davenport, and, of course, Whitby-Oshawa for their remarks, mostly in a positive and kind vein, to those remarks that I made about Bill 50, which I call the ambulance chasers act.

We went through this. A number of the members on our side, with the third party as well, also talked about the waste, the inefficiencies, the whistle-blower confidence where people who have come forward have been intimidated, in their words, at work. Other witnesses would like to come forward but feel they don't have the protection to do that.

So we need this all-party select committee that the member from Newmarket-Aurora and others in this House have called for—members of the third party, members on our side of the House as well—so we can see what actually happened here to bring the OPP in. That probably is going to be necessary as well. We need to make sure this type of injustice, this type of waste of money, resources, that could be put into front-line health care doesn't happen again. It's unfortunate that it did, and as another member said, it looks like it's time for a change of government. As they say, governments are like babies: They need to be changed often, and we see why. And you know the reason why they need to be changed.

1450

As this debate winds down, from my aspect, I look forward to the rest of the afternoon, to hear both members of the government try to defend their point of view—which I think is indefensible, but they'll do an admirable job, I know—and the members on this side from

the third party and our side as well. We're going to hold them to account and try and make them show why we shouldn't have that all-party committee. We're going to keep pushing for that, Mr. Speaker. We're not done on this side of the House, and I look forward to—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, the seat-savers in Mississauga and Oakville. We look forward to getting more information on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I've got to say that the Liberals are renowned at creating a disaster where one didn't exist. If you take a look at our air ambulance service in this province, prior to the government coming to power we had a pretty good hybrid system. We had a public system of land ambulance and a partial public system of the air ambulance system, where the government had a contract with various aviation companies to provide, essentially, different levels of care when it came to air ambulance, and provided also the staffing in a lot of those particular ambulances.

The idea was that the province would keep running, themselves, a service that essentially dealt with critical care, so that if somebody was involved in a motor vehicle accident or needed a quick transfer because of some severe illness that meant that the person had to be transferred from point A to point B, we operated, essentially, a critical care service. That was stationed in places like Timmins, Thunder Bay, I believe London, Toronto and a few other places, in order to be able to make sure that we could move people around effectively.

But what we did as well is that we had people on standby in various companies like Voyageur Airways, Commercial Aviation, various air companies across the province who essentially were themselves charter aircraft companies that had on staff paramedics in order to do transfers in those cases where they were not able to deal with it in the regular system itself. It was a good way of making sure that we didn't overstaff and we didn't over-extend ourselves when it came to the amount of aircraft and personnel that we needed. You took care of the basic service by way of what the government offered, and then, when you had an amassing of service that was needed because of whatever was going on on a particular day, you brought people in. It was a pretty good balance.

Along comes George Smitherman—do you remember that guy? Hmm—former Minister of Education; I think he ran for mayor of Toronto. Anyway, along comes Mr. Smitherman, and he says, “We are going to fix the system,” where maybe the system didn't need a heck of a lot of fixing. And did he ever fix it. He decided to create this sort of stand-alone organization that supposedly is an arm's-length thing from the government, which we find out is not very arm's-length, called Ornge. Ornge goes out and they hire themselves, as a result of putting this together, a number of individuals who have now become infamous, such as Mr. Mazza and others, to essentially set up their own little fiefdom. That little fiefdom—I use

the word “fiefdom” lightly—essentially did a heck of a job for some of them but not a very good job for the rest of us.

Yes, the basic level of service provided by Ornge is a good one. The paramedics that work there and the pilots that work there work hard at providing the service that the people of Ontario need, but what was happening with Mr. Mazza and others is, they were really helping themselves at the plate. They were saying, “How can we benefit out of the particular arrangement that is air Ornge?” in a way that benefitted a few people on the inside. And so, along came this really unfortunate part of history in the province of Ontario, where air Ornge became very tarnished as a result of the actions that were taken by the management at Ornge itself.

The interesting part in all of this is, the government tries to say, “Well, we didn’t know.” Remember that sergeant on Hogan’s Heroes? There was that guy by the name of Sergeant Klink—

Mr. Michael Prue: Schultz. Schultz.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Sergeant Schultz, who said “I know nothing. I see nothing.” Well, that’s what the Minister of Health has been trying to say through this whole thing. She’s a little bit like Sergeant Schultz. Sergeant Schultz would walk in and find Hogan and the guys in the hut with two-way radios and all kinds of stuff they weren’t supposed to do. He’d always walk away saying, “I know nothing. I see nothing. I do nothing.” That’s kind of what the minister did, even though there were all kinds of alarm bells ringing, in everything from ministerial briefings, notes being passed back to the minister, meetings with the minister and, we understand, even with the Premier’s office. There was a fairly good indication that there was something going wrong at Ornge. Instead the government sort of went, “Ah, let’s do a Sergeant Schultz. If we pretend nothing happened, I guess then nothing happened.”

I’ll tell you why I think that happened. It’s because the government really wanted to believe that this particular model was going to work, and when it started to fall apart, it was the embarrassment. How do you admit that what you set up is not working? I think that’s the trouble they got themselves into.

The sad part in all of this is, if the government had dealt with it in the beginning, when they started to get the signs as we did—Howard Hampton, myself, Michael Prue and Andrea Horwath sat on a committee three years ago while all of this was going on. We were saying to the government, “Here’s what we’re hearing from the outside. Here’s what we’re hearing from people who know something about Ornge, who tell us there’s something not right in that particular organization.”

You’d think that the Minister of Health at that point would have said, “Let’s take a look at what’s going on,” and, if there were wrongdoings, to have dealt with them then. If the government had done it back then, sure, I imagine there would have been some criticism from the opposition and from the media because of the model that was created that allowed this to happen, but at least the

government could have protected itself by saying, “We created this thing, yes, but when there was a problem, we tried to fix it.”

Instead, what the government did is, they decided to do a rerun of Hogan’s Heroes and they burrowed down into those tunnel and they watched Sergeant Schultz walk around on the top saying—

Mr. Paul Miller: Colonel Klink.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Don’t get me going with Klink—Sergeant Schultz saying, “I know nothing. I see nothing.”

Here we are, some two or three years later. We’ve now heard from a number of people who have testified at the public accounts committee who are certainly indicating that there was a real problem in the way that organization was run. The government’s defence is, “Well, now we’re going to fix it. This is what Bill 50 is all about.”

I just say it’s a little bit late, in the sense of—you should always try to fix what’s broken; I wouldn’t argue that they shouldn’t try. But the issue is, it’s a little bit late in the game for the government, all of a sudden, to start pretending that they care and that they want to fix this thing, three years into the broken problem. The government essentially should have, in my view, done something about this three years ago. Instead, they’re being taken, kicking and screaming and scratching, all the way to trying to find a way to fix this.

The real test is, will this particular bill actually fix the problem? My reading of it is, it takes a step in that direction, but I don’t think it’s actually going to fix the problem. When you take a look at what this actual bill does, it doesn’t deal with some of the basic problems that are ones that are the foundation of what Ornge is built on. Unless the government is prepared to deal with what the systemic problems were that created the problems at Ornge, the government is going to be right back into the same problems down the way. We will have maybe passed Bill 50 at that point, and the government will say, “Oh, now we fixed it. Don’t worry about it.” But the very model itself lends itself to believe that these kinds of things are possible again.

It’s going to be interesting for this bill, should it get to committee, to see, first of all, what the public has to say about the fix that the government is proposing, and number two, will the government actually be prepared to take amendments that try to indeed do what the government says it wants, which is to prevent another Ornge from happening? That’s going to be the real test. At this point, I don’t know what the government is going to do.

Will this bill pass at second reading, number one? Number two, will this particular bill, in committee, get the kind of airing at that it needs? Number three, will the government actually accept any amendments that come from the committee to try to fix this thing in the future?

Now that we’re where we’re at now, we find ourselves trying to essentially close the barn doors once the horse has bolted out of the barn. I would have hoped that the government would have learned something out of this, and it’s yet to be seen if, in fact, they did.

I look forward to the rest of this debate to see what others have to say. If it goes into committee, I'm sure there's going to be lots of interest.

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A little side note to say, in all of this—and it's the unfortunate part: As a result of the government going the way that it did some years ago when they created Ornge—I guess starting about seven, eight years ago—they've managed to put out of business a whole bunch of charter aircraft companies in northern Ontario, which I don't think served anybody's interest.

You take a look at what's happened to a lot of those companies that used to rely on 30%, 40%, 50%, 60% of their business transferring patients around the province. They have since closed their doors or stopped doing that, and there's a lesser presence when it comes to air charter companies in northern Ontario.

I just think that the government had a really interesting model. It was akin to the old MTO model that said—50% to 60% of the plows were owned and operated by the province. When the government needed extra plows because of large snowstorms or whatever it might be, they would contract a private plow to come in and supplement what the public sector was doing. It seemed to me that was an interesting hybrid model about how you could deliver services in Ontario by providing core service with public sector workers and public sector equipment, and providing the surplus when needed on a contractual basis.

With that, Mr. Speaker, thanks for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Speaker. I think we do agree with the member from Timmins—James Bay that there need to be some serious fixes in Ontario's air ambulance system, and Bill 50, in concert with a new performance agreement—which has already been put in place and which has much stronger controls than the old performance agreement—in fact does that.

It does a number of things: It gives the minister the power to appoint a supervisor if, God help us, we should ever have air ambulance go off the rails the way in which it has done, again—to appoint a supervisor to take over the program. But before you get to that point, it also gives the minister the authority to issue directives on how the air ambulance service is to be operated, which she did not have previously. It gives her the authority to unilaterally add pieces to the performance agreement as new circumstances arrive, as she did not have previously. So there are a number of things in this legislation which strengthen the control of the ministry over the air ambulance service.

But I must quibble with the member's timelines. When we look at the documentation tabled by Malcolm Bates, the director of the Ministry of Health's emergency health services—I mentioned previously a meeting on September 4, 2003, right at the beginning of the election campaign, where the assistant deputy minister said, "Dr. Mazza's in charge." By September 8, Dr. Mazza's

already calling meetings, so this is again in the middle of the election campaign, where he is directing that the team at the Ministry of Health is to have implementation ready for the beginning of November.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Well, at the beginning of November, I don't think—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 50, and I'm looking forward to speaking at length later on this afternoon.

This, of course, is a very important piece of legislation, but it should have been tabled long before, or at least it should have been applied previously. Now I'll speak at greater length on legislation that we previously put forward, and I can tell you one piece of legislation that far outweighs this before us, and that was the Truth in Government Act that I put forward last year. That act would have prevented such indiscretions by Ornge. It would have encouraged all—actually, it wouldn't have encouraged, it would have made it law for every single government agency, board and commission to protect taxpayer dollars. I put forward that legislation and unfortunately before the last election, the Liberals voted that down.

I understand that the member from Guelph is the Liberals' designated hitter on this issue and I can understand why most members in that party will not want to speak to this legislation, because the reality sets in when you discuss this legislation and what actually occurred at Ornge under Chris Mazza and Deb Matthews's watch.

That is why we have been calling for a select committee to investigate this, and that is why we want to see the Premier of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty, brought before the public accounts committee, to answer for what he did and his role in that scandal.

So Speaker, I find it passing strange that Bill 50 has not yet become law, and, in fact, that it even needed to be in the first place, because you cannot legislate ethics. It's time for this legislation to pass but also for that government to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think it's important to remember—you know, not that long ago I was watching from outside. When the public at large has an issue of confidence in the government and how they deal with the medical situation and health of the people of this province, we all have a problem. And the bigger issue of confidence and of competency has not been addressed in this bill. I think that actually, if you look at what's not in this bill, we have some serious issues. When it goes to committee, as my fellow member mentioned, I hope that the government is amenable to receiving amendments and to receiving recommendations, as they should.

One of the big issues that certainly has not been addressed is that Ornge will not be subject to an FOI re-

quest, and the Ontario Ombudsman will not have oversight over the agency, so those big questions of confidence still remain.

The public at large saw this government actually make—the Minister of Health introduced this bill on the same day that the Auditor General released his damning report on Ornge. So there clearly is a disconnect between what is happening in this House and what the public sees. More importantly, that confidence issue has not been addressed in this bill.

I'm certainly hopeful that when this goes to committee—and I know that the NDP will fight hard for it—we'll put forward recommendations which create greater accountability, which create those safeguards that clearly were not in place at the beginning, to ensure that the people of this province actually get quality care when they need it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I guess this is the main reason why the bill is for debate here today. I was listening to the comments from Timmins-James Bay and from the Conservative side as well, and I'm very pleased to see that there is support to move this bill forward and see where we're going to take it from there. We look forward to improvements to the bill as well, to ideas coming at the committee level so that we can indeed make it even better.

The reason why the bill is here is because the Minister of Health has been listening—the Premier as well—and we also have been listening to the recommendations from the Auditor General wanting to see some changes to improve the system of delivery of service to our people of Ontario.

I have to say that I'm pleased to see that the bill indeed will go on and will receive some consultation with new ideas on how this will be better. But there are some points that I want to mention briefly in the short time, Speaker.

It is to:

- appoint a supervisor or a special investigator when the air ambulance service is not being operated in the public interest;

- allow the minister to give direction to an air ambulance service provider like a hospital;

- prescribe performance measures and standards;

- allow the ministry to establish terms to be deemed to be included in the performance agreement between the ministry and the ambulance service provider;

- appoint a provincial representative as well to the air ambulance board; and

- provide whistle-blower protection, as we have seen in the past, for those who disclose information to an inspector, investigator or the ministry—the government itself.

So there are good initiatives that I think are worthwhile mentioning, and we look forward to making it even better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins-James Bay has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all the members who commented, and I just want to start with the last one, saying that the reason we have this bill is because the minister's listening. My God. Where have they been for the last three years? It's not as if these alarm bells were not ringing way before last spring or even way before last fall.

I sat in committee, along with Mr. Prue, with Howard Hampton, who raised these issues back three years ago. We started hearing three or three and a half years ago that there were problems at Ornge. We raised those issues in committee. We raised those issues in the House. The issues were raised directly with the minister, and she chose to do nothing, or he chose to do nothing, at the time. So to say that the minister is listening and that's why we got legislation is a bit of a stretch.

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Then they talk about giving the minister powers. My God, the minister already had the powers. If I was the Minister of Health and somebody came to me and said that something like Ornge was going on, I think I'd be mildly interested and I'd try to do something about it. Instead, the government, which had created Ornge, decided not to use the authority they had under their own powers to stop this from happening.

I go to the point that the member from Kitchener-Waterloo made—which I thought was a good one—which is that the very powers we need to give people the ability to be protected as whistle-blowers, the very powers we need to be able to FOI information, the very powers we need to give the Ombudsman oversight are not contained in this bill. So how serious is the government about closing the circle around trying to make this happen and stopping it from happening again? It seems to me that this is a bit of an exercise in public relations; less so a legitimate legislative exercise to stop this kind of thing from happening again. Only time will tell, as the member said. If this thing goes to committee, let's see if the government is prepared to take the kind of amendments that are needed to really close the circle on this thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's rather disturbing that we're still having to debate this bill. We're in over 13 hours of debate. The reason for that is, speaker after speaker—on the opposition side, anyway—keeps reminding the government members that this is a completely useless piece of legislation and you're wasting our time. The member for Timmins-James Bay, as other members—Whitby-Oshawa today, Nepean-Carleton and Kitchener-Waterloo—all make the point that when we got into the Ornge scandal, it was pretty clear that both under the Independent Health Facilities Act and under the original Ornge performance agreement, the Minister of Health had the ability to send in inspectors and had the ability to take over the board. This whole Bill 50, and the reason

it's been going on for so long in here, is really a cover for the Minister of Health's inability to deal with the Ornge ambulance scandal, the billion-dollar scandal at Ornge.

There's nothing substantive in this legislation. We'd like to be debating jobs for the people of Ontario, proper taxation and an economic plan, but they have this—we're not allowed to use that word, so I won't—sham of a bill out there to try to fool the public that they're doing something and bringing in strong measures.

I'm a former Minister of Health. I used the Independent Health Facilities Act on at least four occasions that I can think of to rein in potential problems at agencies. This agency is no different than most others. The government has a lot of powers, including cabinet itself, to override just about any agreement in the province if they wished. It's a sign of failed leadership.

The single weakest part of this bill, which I know my honourable colleague from Newmarket–Aurora, Mr. Klees, often points out, is the whistle-blower protection section. We wanted special whistle-blower protection as part of the terms of reference for a select committee on Ornge—which we're still calling for. As long as we can hold you up on this bill, we will, because, first of all, we haven't got to all of the problems at Ornge yet, and yet you see this bill as the panacea to cover up—excuse me, to correct—all of the things that have gone wrong at Ornge so they won't go wrong in the future. But you won't let us have a committee. In fact, none of the committees are sitting. After the election, you stalled us for five months in having committees sit. Now you don't want committees to sit to look into your newest scandal, which we'll be talking about more today to do with the power plants—by the way, we've just found papers upstairs that we're probably in the \$400-million mark, not the \$190-million-plus-\$40-million mark that the government claimed. We'll talk more about that some other day, perhaps tomorrow morning, when we start off with a motion of contempt against Minister Bentley and the Liberal government.

Anyway, Bill 50 does not provide across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers. It imposes limits on which individuals are protected and who they can approach with information, so it's rather restrictive. The legislation ought to provide for a formal process through the Ombudsman that will ensure proper protection and follow-up.

Again, the bill is an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister has had the power to appoint a supervisor and/or inspect the Ornge agency from the very beginning of the Ornge saga.

Mr. Speaker, I want to—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: How do you figure that out? You're a former Minister of Health—

Mr. Jim Wilson: Yes, I say to the member from Guelph, I am a former minister. I've used the powers under—

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —the Independent Health Facilities Act. I laughed today. Your minister got up—and, you

know, maybe it wasn't the Minister of Health's fault. Maybe some political operative put it in into her head that, "Minister, you don't have the powers." But I know that if she had gone to her senior legal team at the Ministry of Health, they would have pointed out all the powers she had. She has overwhelming powers to run the health care system, as does the cabinet of the day. You guys were asleep at the wheel, and being part of asleep at the wheel—my honourable colleague Frank Klees, the member for Newmarket–Aurora, who has led the charge on Ornge on behalf of my party, wrote a column back on March 27, so in the spring, when we were still trying to get you to set up a committee on Ornge. He talks about, "In addition to the more than \$700 million that the Ministry of Health gave to Ornge since 2006 to provide air ambulance service, taxpayers are on the hook for another \$300 million that was borrowed through companies owned by the president," Dr. Mazza, "members of" Ornge's "senior management" team "and the board of directors of Ornge." He summarizes the real scandal. He talks in a column that he publishes in his local area, in his riding, about his warnings in committee. The NDP were doing the same warnings back in the spring and leading up to the Auditor General's special report on Ornge at that time, which vindicated and validated everything that our caucus was saying.

So here's the real scandal. He says, "In a letter addressed to the Minister of Health and copied to deputy ministers in three ministries and senior advisers to the Premier"—also received copies—"and the Minister of Finance, Ornge's outrageous scheme was described in great detail. And yet, not one among them triggered to the fact that the public interest may be at risk...."

"Or did they?" He poses the question, and then there's a quote: "'To the nose of this watchdog, this just didn't pass the smell test.'" Mr. Speaker, we know where that quote is from. "These were the exact words used by the Auditor General when he tabled his report in the Legislature on March 21. He was referring to the scheme of non-profit and for-profit spinoff companies that was disclosed in such detail to those senior government officials, including the Minister of Health." Yet they've denied that, Mr. Speaker, up to this day.

"There has not been one person with whom I've discussed this issue," Mr. Klees goes on to say, "who believes that the alarm bells didn't go off—at least in the minds of those civil servants who were fully aware of their responsibilities to protect the public interest. So why the silence? Who and what was behind the silencing?"

Of course, we know from the public accounts committee, Mr. Speaker, now that a number of senior bureaucrats did try to blow the whistle, did try to inform their political bosses that things weren't just right. Cost alone: I can't remember the exact figures, but you'd think when you were getting invoices from Ornge for, I think it was close to—and don't quote me—about \$1,800 for an ambulance transfer within the city, and municipalities and other transfer ambulance services were charging about \$400, you would just think that something would

trigger that there's something wrong and the minister would be told of that in the regular briefings. But anyway, they were asleep at the switch.

We suspect it's because there was a bunch of senior Liberal Party people involved in this whole scheme, too, but once we get our select committee on Ornge—which, as I said, we're not giving up on—we could maybe get to the bottom of that. But of course the government now doesn't want any committees because of the power plant scandal. But you're going to have another scandal of contempt. So, for the second time in the history of this Legislature, a minister of the crown may very well be brought up in contempt of the House. I know my colleague Mr. Harris, from the riding of Kitchener—

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Kitchener—Conestoga—thank you, Mr. Speaker—has on a number of occasions raised, and particularly most recently, the fact that he has asked, the committee has asked, for all the documents on Ornge, and the minister says she's working on it. Well, the clock's ticking on that one, but it's at least a better answer than we got with the stonewalling from the government House leader, from the Minister of Energy and all kinds of members of the Liberal government over the power plants issue. They just said, flat out, no, and then they started to make up excuses like solicitor-client privilege, that Parliament wasn't supreme, that they knew better, that the Legislative Assembly Act didn't apply to them—the list went on and on—that we were going to cost the taxpayers more money. It's just unbelievable.

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The fact that we were going to cost taxpayers more money: The minister said today, "Well, actually, I think the opposition might have helped us. It made us focus our efforts to come to a contractual agreement with Trans-Canada." Of course, the longer these things go on, the more expensive they are. That particular negotiation had gone on for two years, so I think we kind of inadvertently—but on behalf of the taxpayers, thank God we did—forced the government to, as the minister said, focus on the issue and come to a settlement.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, the bill doesn't do anything. We don't think it's a huge priority. We're not in favour of it. It's simply trying to divert attention from the fact that the government did not handle the Ornge situation very well and is not handling the Ornge situation very well. There are other stories to be told, and things are going to come to a standstill again around here, folks, unless you set up those select committees.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the member from Simcoe—Grey, who raised a whole host of issues that I think have been brought up and clearly articulated in this House. Maybe today I'll use my opportunity to talk about the human aspect that I don't think we've touched on today.

One story comes directly from my riding, from Windsor, where a young girl, six years old, Jamie Lynn

Ingham, had developed spinal meningitis and was awaiting transportation from the Ornge air ambulance services. She waited and waited for a helicopter that never came, for a service that was not delivered. Ultimately, that's what we're talking about: the failure of the service as a whole. From design to concept to implementation, the Ornge air ambulance service never responded the way that the government obviously thought it should and was going to, and still didn't respond to the needs of communities like Windsor-Essex.

Unfortunately, Jamie Lynn Ingham passed away. She was a twin sister; she has an identical six-year-old twin. I went to Jamie Lynn's funeral, and it was one of the most tragic incidents of this entire scandal, that a young girl—and her family—who should have been able to rely on this government to provide that service had now tragically passed away. Those safeguards should have been in place.

Who's at fault? Well, I know that you could never trace it back. You never think, in the backrooms of the Liberal Party when the plan is devised, that there will be a human element to this, that the failures will add a human element, but indeed they did and we all know those stories. There are countless others where the system failed them.

Will this bill go the distance in terms of safeguarding others? I don't think so, but certainly members on this side of the House will do every effort to make sure that it does.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: As I mentioned before, by the time we got to September 2003—that is, during the election campaign of 2003—Chris Mazza was firmly in charge, and in fact he had been given the authority to tell people at the emergency health services branch what to do. He directed that the implementation plan was to be all set to go to cabinet at the beginning of November 2003. That would be before the new cabinet, the Liberal cabinet, was even appointed.

But what was interesting was that he kept responsibility for the legal work for drafting the performance agreement. A lot of other responsibilities got farmed out, but he kept that one for himself. What we know from the documentation that has been tabled at the committee—and there have been thousands of pages—is that in fact the legal work to draft the performance agreement began way back in the spring of 2003 at Fasken Martineau, and the person who was the lead lawyer in the health files at Fasken Martineau was, of course, Lynne Golding, who is married to the Minister of Health, Tony Clement, and the group that worked with her was in fact drafting the performance agreement.

Now, it is true that Ms. Golding appeared before the committee and said that the performance agreement which her group drafted was a wonderful performance agreement. But of course she said that; her people wrote it. We differ; we have a new performance agreement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to join the debate started by our former Minister of Health and our current House leader, the member from Simcoe-Grey. He has been here over the course of three decades—22 years. I'm not quite sure how many elections that is, but I know it's been since 1990. He has been a very strong member, a very capable member, in opposition and in government. I can tell you something: When he says that a minister of the crown has extraordinary powers and that cabinet has the ability to run the health care system, he knows of what he speaks. I know that during the heckles it was a member who had never served any time in cabinet suggesting that.

I just want, at this point in time, to speak to the integrity of the member from Simcoe-Grey and his knowledge of the health care file and his ability to address complex matters in this assembly. He knows, as we all do in the opposition, how painful this experience with Ornge has been across the province with the public, particularly with patients.

My colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, my seatmate, knows full well the tragedies that can befall a community as a result of mismanagement at Ornge. In fact, in our community in eastern Ontario, we have seen first-hand what Ornge has been unable to do as a result of its mandate because the management there has been wrong. That is why we've called for a select committee to review this troubled agency, and that is why we want the minister to resign. That is also why we want the Premier to be held accountable for his actions and brought before the public accounts committee.

I congratulate the member from Simcoe-Grey for his stealth leadership on the health care file throughout these years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Simcoe-Grey because, as was said, he was at one time the Minister of Health. He certainly understands the file, and he certainly understands the peculiarities of what has happened here in the last number of years.

He pointed out something during his speech, and I think it bears saying again and again and again—many times, until people understand: It is not necessarily this minister who was at fault, although she is part of that chain. I mean, it all started with Minister Smitherman; it went on to Minister Caplan; it went on to her. As that chain of command was passed from person to person to person, nothing really happened. Succeeding ministers turned a blind eye. As my friend from Timmins-James Bay so eloquently said, it was sort of a Sergeant Schultz moment. It wasn't just one person; it was three ministers in a row, and they were nonresponsive.

The current minister has promised the estimates committee, of which I'm a member and the Chair, that she will be forthcoming with documentation. We await that documentation, because I think it is essential that the estimates committee, and indeed this whole House, sees the trail of what has happened here over a great length of time.

We look at this particular bill, Bill 50, and it is a very minor bill. It is a bill that should have been part and parcel of the entire Ornge experience from the time it was set up all those many years ago until today. To come at it eight or 10 years late has allowed a whole bunch of things to transpire which have not been good for the people of Ontario.

I am looking forward to this going to second reading and into committee, because it is only in committee that we can explore what needs to be done and make the amendments that will actually make this bill effective.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Simcoe-Grey for his two-minute response.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, colleagues, and I particularly want to thank my colleague from Nepean-Carleton for the kind comments she made, the thoughtful comments—maybe not all true, but I enjoyed them anyway—in terms of my competency as a minister. I know that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines was chirping up that I was just bloody awful as Minister of Health.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I didn't say that at all.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I thought that's what you were saying over there, and I was thinking, "That's not very nice of you, Rick."

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: But I didn't say that.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, then I correct his record.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Nepean-Carleton is absolutely right in her remarks. They don't want to set up a select committee on Ornge to truly get to the bottom of this. We've asked, really as a last resort, the Premier to come forward rather than hide behind his cabinet ministers and Liberal Party officials like Alf Apps. The former president of the federal Liberal Party actively engaged the Ornge file on behalf of Dr. Mazza.

It's interesting. We'd really like Lynne Golding and Guy Giorno to come, prominent Conservatives—Lynne is married to a prominent Conservative; Guy Giorno is a former chief of staff—because they worked at Fasken Martineau, the great law firm, the same as Alf Apps, but they were the Conservatives. Apparently, when they gave Dr. Mazza some legal opinions that he shouldn't be siphoning money off the taxpayer-paid not-for-profit Ornge ambulance services and putting them into his newly established private company—when they gave a couple of opinions that, "No, you shouldn't do that," they dropped Lynne Golding and Guy Giorno and picked up the former president of the federal Liberal Party, Alf Apps, so they'd get a more favourable opinion about whether what Dr. Mazza was up to was indeed legal. That's the story that would be told if you'd establish the committees.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to speak for the next 10 minutes on this piece of legislation, Bill 50.

Speaker, it is no secret, if you've listened to my colleagues in the official opposition under the leadership of Tim Hudak, that we believe that this legislation doesn't have the substance that is required to deal with some of the scandals that we have seen not only at Ornge—I might also suggest that we have seen massive scandals at the OLG; we have seen scandals at eHealth, all of which the government promised would never occur again because they tabled legislation in the last Parliament that would have eradicated further scandals and mismanagement of public spending. In the case of eHealth, they promised it would never happen again with public health care dollars. That was false, because we know, from what has been proven through a series of studies and committee hearings at public accounts, that that money has been mismanaged at Ornge. That has put patients at risk in every region of the province, particularly in the north but also in my community of eastern Ontario, which I spoke about earlier with the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Our concern, of course, is this bill lacks substance. As I stated earlier today, you can't legislate ethics. This is a government that has promised that they would bring in more ethics and more accountability and more transparency, yet on every score they have failed. We continue to see that this issue, whether it's Ornge, OLG, eHealth or Cancer Care Ontario, continues to crop up. It has become an attitude of arrogance in this Liberal government and a sense of entitlement across government lines.

Again, when I speak to this legislation, I say to all of you: It lacks substance. If they were to bring forward something more substantive, i.e., the Truth in Government Act, which our party put forward and would have increased public accountability where taxpayer dollars were spent, understanding that they and we are the stewards of public taxpayers, that would be one thing.

They also look at this as a potential whistle-blower piece of legislation. That could be nothing further from the truth. This piece of legislation does not go near as far as the federal Accountability Act, where they dealt with the responsibilities of the public service as it pertains to those who are whistle-blowing in their communities. I know a little bit about that, Speaker, because I did spend some time on Parliament Hill drafting private members' legislation with respect to whistle-blower protection.

As you'll recall, Speaker, the biggest political scandal in Canadian history was the sponsorship scandal, with the federal cousins of this Liberal government being actively engaged in that scandal. Many Canadians know that \$100 million had been wasted as a result of the connections between various members of the federal Liberal Party.

That ushered in a new era of accountability which—my colleague and my dear friend from Whitby–Oshawa has her partner in that government, a very strong Conservative government, that rooted out some of these problems with ethics. They brought in stealth legislation prohibiting these ethical challenges that are now mirroring this new Liberal government that has been—sorry, Speaker—here for nine years.

It's rather astonishing when they get up on the other side of the House and they mention names like Tony Clement or Lynne Golding or Guy Giorno. Well, Speaker, I hate to break it to them, but this ain't 2003 anymore; it's 2012. You have been in charge for nine long years. That's why I call it the decade of darkness, because they did exactly what their federal Liberal counterparts did. They allowed their friends to pad their pockets under the guise of building public services, and you could never question them. But now the rot has finally come home to roost, and you see after nine years scandals like this being publicized, and you look at legislation with relatively little substance, all in the name of public relations rather than public policy. I speak specifically to this.

At the time, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, Elizabeth Witmer, was actually our health critic. She of course would have been the first person to speak to this legislation as our then health critic. She went so far as to say that the single biggest weakness is the so-called whistle-blower protection section. She said that the bill does not provide across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers. It imposes limits on which individuals are protected and who they can approach with the information. The legislation ought to provide a formal process, through the Ombudsman, that will ensure proper protection and follow-up.

Speaker, that is a key flaw with this legislation—a key flaw within this legislation. If one is to protect whistle-blowers, one must protect all whistle-blowers, and one must ensure that there is a fair, open, equitable process for them to tell the truth about the impending look of wrongdoing within that government agency, commission, department or board. That is not what this legislation will do.

I remember back in the days of eHealth when this government promised that they would never, ever once again be caught creating a scandal and that never, ever once again would they lack the determination or the diligence to follow up with some of these types of challenges ethically within their own government. We, of course, remember groups like Courtyard, who made a lot of money off of eHealth. We remember the OLG, by the way, Speaker, which, after losing \$46 million in casinos in Niagara and Windsor, now wants to expand right across the province and kill the horse racing industry, all for the love of money. Who in the heck would give them more power without them doing their due diligence and having the auditor review what they're doing?

It speaks to the lack of a plan from this government. There is not enough oversight. We have been proposing, since as long as I have been here, greater oversight of government.

The accountability challenge of the last decade has hit our sister and brother provinces across this nation as well as the federal House of Parliament. It seems that the era of accountability has not yet knocked on the door of this Liberal government. If it has knocked on the door of this Liberal government, they've ignored it. They've chosen instead, Speaker, only to act and provide legislation or

directives or other protocols once they have been caught. This has been a constant theme of frustration on the part of the official opposition given that this government has, from time to time, promised to do something and has utterly and miserably failed.

The bill, as I have said previously and as I know my colleagues have said, is an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister has had the power to appoint a supervisor and/or an inspector from the beginning of the Ornge saga. My colleague from Simcoe-Grey, a former Minister of Health, our current House leader, has stood before this chamber on many occasions to point out the obvious flaw in this government's thinking, to say that it wasn't the Minister of Health's fault. It was the Minister of Health's fault. It was the previous Minister of Health's fault, and the minister before that. Three Liberal ministers had the opportunity to do something and chose not to. Now they want to create a process because they're too guilty. They want to say, "Sorry, we're not going to do it again. Please vote for this legislation." Well, this legislation doesn't go far enough.

1540

The minister had the power to intervene at Ornge under the original Ornge performance agreement as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act. Article 15 of the original performance agreement gave her the powers of intervention. She chose not to intervene, and that is why we are calling for that minister's resignation. We have been calling for Deb Matthews to resign as a result of her inability to deal with the scandal at Ornge, the mismanagement of taxpayer dollars and the fact that that company, under the guise of the public service here in Ontario, has put public safety at risk. That's terrible, Speaker, and that's why she should resign.

In addition, we have called for a select committee to review all of the information so that those whistle-blowers would have protection so we can get to the bottom of how rotten this scandal actually is. I credit the member from Newmarket-Aurora, Frank Klees, for the great work that he has done.

Finally, Speaker, with the last few seconds I have remaining I must say this: The fact that the Premier of Ontario, when invited to public accounts, chose not to show up in this minority Parliament speaks to the need that we need to strike committees again in this assembly and that we need to ensure that there is a select committee on Ornge.

The Liberals want to tell you that enough Liberals have appeared before public accounts. The fact is, they have shut down public accounts. They have shut down a select committee and they want to shut down this assembly from having anything to say. Speaker, we'll have no more of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I think the two issues for me are the issue that the member from Kitchener-Waterloo raised today, the issue of competency, but the second, I

think, is the issue of confidence. I think that patients in this province, families in this province and certainly the opposition parties have lost confidence in the oversight of the Ornge ambulance.

This is a very important issue. We're not talking about widgets here; we're not talking about something on a factory floor; we're talking about real human beings here. We've heard, over the last couple of months, about the long delays in patient transfers—if the patients were transferred at all. We heard about some untimely deaths of patients because of the issues around Ornge. These are people's lives; these are people's loved ones. This is why there's so much passion to get up and discuss the issue of Ornge.

From our perspective, this bill needs to get into committee. It needs to have some amendments made to it to ensure that, at the end of the day, we don't have something similar happen. But the bill itself doesn't go far enough. In fact, some of the things that the bill is purporting to do—in fact, the Minister of Health already had the ability to enact some of those processes, but she chose not to.

From our perspective, from the NDP perspective, we look forward to some debate on this issue when it gets to committee over the coming weeks. We think it's a very important issue not only for the patients and clients in this province but for the taxpayers in this province so that their hard-earned dollars go to services that they can rely on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to comment again, this time on the remarks of the member from Nepean-Carleton. I must say that I do agree with the comments from the member for Welland that what we need to do is get this bill into committee and see if there are improvements. Certainly, we can discuss whether there are suggestions around improving Bill 50.

I must say that I really have to wonder about the member from Nepean-Carleton's definition of "shut down." We have done many days of hearings, including throughout the summer—hours and hours and hours of witnesses, including three visits from the Minister of Health. We got thousands and thousands of pages of documents.

One of the interesting documents that was tabled was from this meeting back on September 4, 2003, when responsibility for Ornge was assigned to Dr. Mazza—so this is prior to the 2003 election campaign. One of the interesting things in the documentation at that time is that there actually was a direction that this new air ambulance program should engage in fundraising. This seems to be the idea that got Mazza thinking that it was okay that he could set up for-profit companies. I must say, Speaker, I believe that that was not the intent of the assistant deputy minister at the time. I think he meant "engage in fundraising" in the way in which a hospital board engages in fundraising, which is for additional equipment and capacity to operate the hospital and to operate, in this

case, the base. But that seems to be the direction which gave Mazza the opinion he could do what he did.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to speak to this. My colleague from Nepean—Carleton is very knowledgeable in these types of matters and always puts her best foot forward on behalf of this Legislature to protect the taxpayers of Ontario. Similarly, she paid homage to Jim Wilson, a former Minister of Health, who obviously knows this file front and back. It's a shame they didn't actually ask Mr. Wilson for some of his expertise; maybe they wouldn't have gotten themselves into this absolutely dismal situation that they're in.

This bill does nothing but shine a light on the incompetence of the Liberal government. It is very similar, if I can draw you a comparison, Mr. Speaker, to the situation of the gas plant in Mississauga, where a former minister set up a boondoggle and then another gets thrown under the bus and has to take the heat and, in this case, probably the fall. We're still waiting to see what's going to fall out of this Mississauga gas plant and Oakville gas plant boondoggle.

But I'll go back to this one. This current Minister of Health has tabled a bill; however, it is too little, too late. The corruption has happened with no oversight, really nothing that they're actually asking to bring backwards and no accountability for those people that they know had misdeeds. The waste has already happened, and we, the people of Ontario, the taxpayers of Ontario, are feeling that and will continue to feel it. We're not even scratching the surface. We asked for a select committee so that we could get to the bottom of this. We wanted to make sure that the Alfred Appses and the Chris Mazzas of the world could never do this type of thing again under anyone's watch, and yet we keep getting stifled. The Premier still refuses to come and actually tell us how many meetings he had with Dr. Mazza or Mr. Appes.

This is a bill that even misses the boat on whistle-blower protection. We have people who are stepping up, jeopardizing potentially their own career aspirations because they know it's the right thing, but all this minister continues to do is to say, "We will do better in the future." Well, you know what? That's not enough. We need to hold people accountable. We need to ensure that our health care system is there when the people of Ontario need it.

Ornge is nothing but a fiasco. This bill is not going to fix it. We need to continue to get to the bottom of it on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to be here today and speak on Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services.

One thing this bill does allow for is amendments to the accountability agreement at any point through regulation and without consultation. This is the first time that this has been done. Our concern is that if the minister can

make amendments or regulations to this bill at any point without consultation, perhaps that's something we should be looking at a little closer. Without consultation, there could be situations where we could end up in a problematic amendment that could actually backfire.

So having transparency is great, but there should be accountability as to when amendments are made and regulations are put through; there needs to be consultation every step of the way. We know that Ornge has already exploded, and we don't want this happening again. So let's be cautious. When we get to committee, let's talk about this and the pros and the cons before we agree to that amendment in this bill.

1550

It also provides whistle-blower protection to those air ambulance workers who disclose information to the ministry, the inspector, the investigator or special investigator who are going to be part of this bill. I'm glad to see that in the bill. I would think that any kind of whistle-blower protection in a medical type of area is very important. People shouldn't feel they're going to be reprimanded or lose their job when there is health, safety or even lives at stake—when it comes to health. I'm glad to see that that's in there. We definitely need to have more transparency from the ministers themselves with regards to accountability and certainly that workers have that whistle-blower protection if there is something that goes awry and they can actually be listened to and actions can be taken upon their concerns.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That includes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's my pleasure to close off the last few moments. I want to say thank you very much to the members from Welland and London—Fanshawe for their contribution in the debate as well as to my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, who is our deputy health critic—I thank you very much for your debate—and of course, the member from Guelph.

It's entertaining to listen to the members opposite, because they always tell us it's 2003. So, much like in a hostage-taking situation, if I could have one of the pages come forward, I'd like to send over a clipping to the member from the newspaper that actually states that the date today is Monday, September 24, 2012, not 2003. So, there have been nine years that have elapsed since they first took office. In that time they have presided over two of the largest health care spending scandals in Canadian history. First it was eHealth; now it is Ornge. They're responsible for both of them, whether they want to acknowledge that or not.

They've also been responsible for a mismanagement scandal at Cancer Care Ontario, also with health care dollars in this province. They have been also responsible for a scandal at OLG.

So, for the members opposite, I say: The decade of darkness is firmly in your hands. We'll be seeking to remove us and the rest of the province out of that decade

in the next election. I will say this: The bill before us, Bill 50, is nothing more than trying to legislate ethics with no substance. This will not change the next scandal. We have to change this government. That's what we intend to do. That's why we will be here, continuing each and every day to call for Premier McGuinty to be held accountable for this by showing up at committee, having Deb Matthews resign—we're going to continue to stand up and do that, and we're going to continue to call for a select committee.

Above all, we can't get any work done in this House until they actually strike committees so we can go forward with democracy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today and speak to Bill 50. I haven't had an opportunity to prepare much today. I didn't realize this bill was being called. But it's Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services.

I think what summarizes this whole air ambulance fiasco are the teacher ads—and they're running even currently, right now—where they show, it looks like it's the Premier in the background and he's playing with this little Ornge air—

Interjection: Helicopter.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: A little helicopter, yes. The first thing I was wondering when I had seen that ad is, "I wonder what happened to the little Ornge motorcycles?" I understand out at the crystal palace that there were actually a couple of those, at least a couple of them, worth over \$100,000 each. They haven't really come up in the debate here very much, I don't think. But apparently they are sold now. But those are the little stories, those ads put on by the OSSTF that actually, I think, brought a lot of attention to this air ambulance fiasco even as we speak.

Here we are today, and we're debating Bill 50, and I guess we're going to vote on the previous bill. But, you know, we have no committee to send it to. It's my understanding right now that all committees are in limbo around here because the current government wants to renegotiate how committee structures are set up. The reality is, they want to have basically a majority status on the committees in a minority situation.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Can you believe that?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: That's difficult to believe.

Here we're going to work on Bill 50. We're going to speak to this as long as we can and bring attention to this fiasco. But the reality is that, even if we get through second reading, and first reading was actually made on March 21 of this year, we have no committee to go to. My first question to the government members is: When are we going to re-establish our committees? Basically, without a committee structure, you're almost in contempt of Parliament if you've got nothing to send it to.

As someone who sat on a legislative assembly committee—we looked at changes to the standing orders—

speaker after speaker came in and told us in our deputations and teleconferencing on that committee that the committee structure is the backbone of the British parliamentary system. Right now, as occurred last fall and as is happening right now, we really do not have a committee structure here. We're debating this, hoping that something will happen and the government will come to the table and re-establish the committees. That, right off the bat, is very important, in my opinion, that that happen. Bill 50—I'm not sure if it'll go to public accounts or not after second reading debate, but we don't have a public accounts committee to send it to.

That takes us to what the public accounts committee has done. I think they've done a remarkable job. I applaud the work of our lead on that committee, Frank Klees. I think he's done a remarkable job. Then, of course, on top of it all, somebody is trying to demonize him on the side with false information. It's just sad that that has happened.

But above all, I thought we in this House, the majority of the House, agreed to go to a select committee. I thought we agreed to do that, and they said—

Mr. Bill Walker: The will of the people, I think is what they said.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: They said, "The will of the people." But you know what? We fought it all the way. The government obviously doesn't want to go to the select committee. I think a lot of things could be established at that committee. In fact, I think at that committee, we could bring in so many special representatives, people who have a knowledge going way back on this—

Mr. Jim McDonell: Whistle-blower protection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: —whistle-blower protection, you name it. But particularly, Mr. Speaker, I guess, since around January of this year, December of last, right after the election, I've had some whistle-blowers come to me. They're very concerned about what they tell me. They certainly don't want their names—some of them are employees of Ornge. They're very concerned and have been concerned for some time.

I've also had families of people severely injured in accidents, in one case a major accident in Sudbury, where the air ambulance, Ornge, didn't want to fly the young man back to Toronto. Before that actually occurred, his family said, "If he's not flown to Toronto, there will be a lawsuit." Eventually Ornge agreed to send this young lad back. He is now a healthy young man and doing very well, but it took a lawsuit—to threaten them—to actually do that.

The Green Energy Act—wow—Bill 50: These are the stamps of our previous health minister. Over and over again, I see one blunder after another. It looks like we've had some major, major mistakes, not only with the wind and solar and how that's all done and taking support away from the municipalities. You just wonder how we got this far.

That takes me to a third point I wanted to add today, and that's the whole purpose of the OPP investigation into what's happening at Ornge. Obviously, this is a huge

investigation. I've never talked to anyone who is actually part of the investigation yet, but I can tell you this has got to be international, as well. With all the companies that were set up and the monies that were transferred, this actually would probably take in Scotland Yard, the FBI, Interpol—I'm assuming they would all be part of that. Maybe I'm wrong on that; I don't know. Maybe some of the government members can clarify whether or not. But when you see that mishmash of corporations that were set up under Ornge, obviously, money had to change hands throughout international boundaries. I'm not sure the OPP have the ability to investigate beyond Ontario without the advice and the help of other police jurisdictions.

1600

That takes me to something that came up to me from a retired OPP officer a few weeks ago, and I would love to hear some feedback from anyone who has the knowledge on this. This is what happened. I was talking to a retired OPP officer who is currently working in another job. He told me that under the Mike Harris government, with the size of the provincial health care budget, Premier Harris, under that jurisdiction, had set up basically a detachment of the OPP within the Ministry of Health—I've made this comment to a few people now—and that was eventually taken away. There's basically no oversight now with the OPP in the Ministry of Health, and they did it for a reason.

Of course, this officer that I've have talked to—and he's willing to talk in the future—he's saying that we might have avoided the eHealth scandal and we might have avoided this whole thing with the Ornge air ambulance if in fact we had had the OPP oversight keeping a close eye on this huge budget. Of course, that budget has grown from something like \$19 billion, when I came here in 1999, to over \$50 billion. There are all kinds of opportunities for mismanagement of that money, and maybe we do need tighter oversight on it. Whether this bill does it or not, I don't know. I'm not so sure of that.

Bill 50, I guess, is supposed to be more oversight, but we certainly weren't going to have a Bill 50 until the scandal broke in this Legislature. There was no plan last fall, when they were campaigning and promising the whole world to everybody, that we were going to have a Bill 50 to oversee Chris Mazza and the air ambulance service. The only reason it happened, of course, is because it was exposed and they had to bring out something.

What got me was that, throughout the spring session and into the fall session, they kept saying, "Why are you not bringing forth Bill 50? You're blocking Bill 50." Who ever tried to block Bill 50? Does anyone know who tried to block it? I don't. I think they just didn't want to bring it forward. Now we've got nothing else to debate and no committees to send it to, on top of that.

Mr. Speaker, that's kind of where we're going with this thing. I guess we'll get through this and we'll get second reading debate complete. But do you know what? We have no committee to send it to. They don't want to form committees. So it's sort of a dysfunctional Parlia-

ment down here. We're debating Bill 50 today. Maybe there will be something else to debate tomorrow.

The reality is, this has been one huge mistake, and someone has to be accountable. I hope that between possibly public accounts getting up again in the future; maybe the select committee, if we're really, really lucky, and they finally agree to do it; and finally, maybe if the OPP come through with a good, clean investigation into what happened here, although that could take two or three years—we may finally get to the bottom of what happened in the air ambulance scandal.

Thank you very much for the opportunity today, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I wanted to give my input a little bit more about the ministry oversight, because, unfortunately, that's why we're here today: the lack of oversight. The one amendment I mentioned before allows the amendment of accountability at any point through regulation without consultation, and this is one of the first times that this has been done.

I go back to the original oversight that was through Ornge. Apart from the matter of the sunshine list, there are many unanswered questions that came about with Ornge. One of the things that was put in the Auditor General's report was that in February 2006, the Minister of Health "committed to set standards and monitor performance against those standards to ensure that the 'end result will be improved care, improved access to service, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of service, and the assurance of greater fiscal and medical accountability.'" That's on page 12 of the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General said there was never really any follow-through on that.

Quoting from the Auditor General again, on page 7: "However, the ministry has not been obtaining the information it needs to meet these oversight commitments."

Where I'm concerned is, when we give the accountability amendment for her to make agreements at any point through regulation without consultation—I think that needs to be tweaked. We need to have consultation. We can't let one person make those amendments and regulations without consulting with their ministries, stakeholders or people whom it's going to affect. I think we have already proven the accountability piece isn't working. It said right in the report that she failed to do that. Giving a minister any kind of power not to have consultation, I think, is the wrong way to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very pleased to stand up today to speak about Bill 50. I was listening very carefully to the member for Simcoe North, and he was right: There were a lot of questions that he asked that were not answered, he's told us, at committee. But you know, Mr. Speaker, there was one person missing: the author of this mess. The author of this mess was the Minister of Health who was there when this company

was formed: It's Minister Clement. They asked Minister Clement to come answer questions from the committee, but he refused to come. Who hired this person who was the CEO of Ornge? Who hired him?

Mr. Bill Walker: Chris Mazza.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes, Chris Mazza was hired also by the former Minister of Health, Minister Clement. I'm sure Minister Clement would have a lot to say if he appeared before the committee and answered the questions from the member for Simcoe North.

Also, he had a question about the health fraud and the OPP. I'm going to reassure him and tell him that there is still OPP looking after health fraud. It's reassuring that they're still there, looking after all these frauds.

I was impressed by the comment from the MPP from Welland. She's a former nurse and she knows that when we need to transport these patients by air ambulance, they are in a very precarious health situation. We need to redress that. I hope that Bill 50 will help.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's a privilege to stand up and comment on the comments from our colleague on this side.

It's interesting that we talk about them closing the book. They would like to close the book on this saga. I would like to remind the Minister of Community Safety that Ornge was not put together under the Harris government; it was put together under the McGuinty government. There's no trail that goes back to the former government. I often wonder—I've sat here a year—if Bill Davis sat back and blamed the government that was there 60 years before them. When does the statute of limitations stop on blaming the party before? Even when they're not involved, they're still involved.

We look at some of the issues—as my colleague talked about, the Ornge helicopters, the Ornge motorcycle and those advertisements, but there's no talk about a ministry that set up something where they go out and they overbuy the most expensive assets. They bought four extra planes and helicopters—ones that they didn't need—and then tried to retrofit them.

It goes to talk about the oversight. This is the first time I've ever heard of a ministry saying that they didn't have oversight over their own ministry. If you're going to say that, tell the public that. My colleague from Nepean-Carleton is getting tired of addressing the radio station to tell them, "No, we don't have the ability to bring the government down. It takes a confidence vote." It just goes to say the people of Ontario are getting upset with what's going on here and the lack of oversight. I think it's time for members opposite to listen to that and start looking back and putting oversight, putting real issues on the table.

They talk about delaying this bill, and as the member said, there's no committee to go to, anyway. This bill was first brought up almost nine months ago and it's still going to go nowhere when debate collapses because there's no committee structure in place. This government's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think we just go back to one of the original concerns as the bill is presented, and that's around the lack of oversight with regard to an FOI—that Ornge would be exempt and not subject to an FOI, nor will the Ontario Ombudsman have oversight over the agency. This speaks to a general confidence issue that we all face. We all know that organizations behave differently when they know they are under an FOI. There is that level of accountability; there's that level of knowing that what is happening within that organization is subject to the public's approval.

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Just look at all the hospitals that came under an FOI just in January. The first thing they did was that they posted their CEO contracts and salaries on their websites, displaying to the public at large how the public money is being spent.

In this instance it's not just about money; it was about competency and it was about trust ultimately. The Ontario public takes their health care issues seriously. That's why this situation, as it was described earlier, did blow up.

The FOI access also brings transparency, but without this bill, Ornge will continue to be exempt. This is something that we certainly will have to address at committee when it gets there. It's something that we have heard from the general public: that they want greater oversight into how Ornge is operating. You can't blame the public for having a lack of confidence, on the whole, in how this agency has been operating.

Air ambulances deal with life-and-death situations, and sometimes things do go wrong. For those families to know they can rely on a service to ensure their children and their family members will be dealt with safely and expediently is a matter of trust. This needs to go to committee. These issues need to be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We now return to the member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I would like to thank the member from London-Fanshawe, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and the new member from Kitchener-Waterloo—and I want to congratulate her on her election here. Thank you very much, and I appreciate their comments.

I did want to just go back to the minister for one second on the oversight. What the officers have told me—when it was set up previously in the late 1990s with the OPP, they almost had like a detachment in the ministry of around 30 employees. That's what I was told. He has told me, and he's now retired, that it has been severely diminished over that period of time. They do not have the power they had at one time, and it was done under previous Minister Smitherman at that time. I did want to point that out, because he did feel that there was an opportunity that they might have found out more things about the Ornge fiasco before that particular point.

But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, we've got a problem here. We've got the debate happening here today. As I said earlier, it came in as a result of the pressure from the media's breaking news here in this Parliament.

Even if we get Bill 50 through second reading and a vote on it, we still have no place to send it at this point. I think that's pretty bad. Here we are almost at Thanksgiving in the year. We need to move forward. There's a lot of legislation that should be brought in, there are some great private members' bills out there that should be debated, and yet we have no place to send this bill.

I encourage the government members and the House leaders to make this happen very quickly because this sort of thing should go to committee. We also need that select committee established immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M. Peter Shurman: Je veux adresser quelques mots en français, premièrement pour ajouter mes mots, mes opinions, au débat, et pour répondre à ma collègue la ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Affaires francophones, qui a dit que, dans un sens, les problèmes d'Orme ont été créés, il était une fois, par un gouvernement avant l'année 2003, le gouvernement Harris. Je ne peux pas comprendre pourquoi elle ne veut pas prendre ses propres responsabilités.

I don't understand why after nine years, Speaker, it seems impossible for that minister or this government to take responsibility for what is theirs. If the responsibility for something that happens in the here and now relates somehow to an action that was taken by somebody who was once upon a time in place, then suffice it to say that we might as well blame the debt and deficit on John A. Macdonald or Isaac Brock and not the McGuinty government. You've been in place for nine years. Do you take responsibility for the operations of government in Ontario at this place or not? It seems to be, Speaker, that the answer is not.

The fact of the matter is, we're debating a bill, Bill 50, and I've got to say that the first thing about Bill 50 that surprises me is that it doesn't have a fancy title. If we're talking about the budget these days, we have to deal with legislation called "strong measures." If we're talking about taking care of what's going on in our schools, it might be called "putting students first," but this, for Liberals, has a very simplistic title. It's called An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services—pretty plain and simple. I personally would have preferred the "cover your posterior act" because that's exactly and only what this bill does.

Speaker, if you take a look at the explanatory note—and I'm going to read it into the record because it's very short. It says, "The Ambulance Act is amended to allow providers of air ambulance services to be designated as 'designated air ambulance service providers.'" How about that?

"The Lieutenant Governor in Council is given the power to appoint provincial representatives to sit on the board of a designated air ambulance service provider, and

the minister is given the power to issue directives to designated air ambulance service providers."

Up to that point—and that's two of about six paragraphs—that's what the minister had as her powers to begin with. She didn't take them seriously, obviously.

"The regulations may deem certain provisions to be included in an agreement between Ontario and a designated air ambulance service provider.

"The Lieutenant Governor in Council may appoint special investigators to investigate and report on the activities of a designated air ambulance service provider, and may appoint a supervisor to exercise"—I'm going to stop at this point. This is gobbledegook. This is what we call "boiler plate." It really doesn't do anything, and if you delve into the three pages that constitute this bill and just get by the definitions, what you find is a band-aid. How appropriate for something that deals with something as important as our ambulance service, which is a key feature for people who are in dire need at any particular given time, car accidents being the first thing that comes to mind.

This bill is there for one reason: It is to cover the backside collectively of the government on something where it dropped the ball, and dropped it significantly. I'm going to quote from David Oraziotti, MPP for Sault Ste. Marie, and I'll tell you when he said this. He said, "It's time for the ministry to consider additional providers for transport services. My expectation is this organization that has the contract with the ministry to provide the service does so in a timely manner. There is a performance review process within that contract, and perhaps it needs to be reviewed to ensure they're living up to obligations." Mr. Oraziotti said that in October 2009. So we're talking about three years ago, and that particular member, a member then and a member now of this government, recognized that there was something wrong. Are we to infer from this that in discussions at the caucus level of the Liberal Party, he didn't raise this? Nobody else raised it? There wasn't some discussion internally about the operations of Orme? The ministry never exercised oversight?

I'm going to tell you something, Speaker: I spent the bulk of my career as a CEO. As a CEO, I had hundreds of people who, in various ways, reported through other people to me. I could not possibly know what they were all doing, and I could not possibly micromanage what they were doing. That is not dissimilar from the job of a minister of the crown in this or any other government. You're like a CEO. You run a ministry; it has hundreds, sometimes, as it is in health, thousands of people. You cannot possibly know what every single one of them is doing, so you have reporting structures that bring information to you.

My directive, when I was a CEO, was: I don't ever want to catch anybody in a lie, and I don't ever want to catch anybody hiding information from me. If you bring me the information and you tell me what's wrong, we'll sit down and figure out how to address it and fix it together. The only way you're in trouble with me is if you

lie to me or if you hide information from me. I would expect that to be the watchword or the rule of thumb, the first one, for anybody at the head of an organization, and I would certainly apply that rule of thumb to ministers. I would say that in the case of Minister Matthews, this was not the order of the day. I don't know if it was then—obviously not, I would have to say—and I don't know if it is now. I think this bill is her idea of what will help her achieve that, but that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about doing what you have to do when you have to do it.

1620

I recall a day last December when I went from media office to media office up on the third floor of this building because I was the spokesperson for the party that day, and what we wanted to highlight were the transgressions that we were recording from whistle-blowers who came forward on the Ornge file. And interestingly, on that very same day, I kept crossing paths with who? Minister Deb Matthews, who was also going from media office to media office to put out the fire that was Ornge for her. That was in December.

I quoted Mr. Oraziotti, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, who made his comments back in 2009. I could just as easily have quoted our critic, who has done such a stellar job on this file, Frank Klees, the member for Newmarket–Aurora, who was asking questions of that minister in this House in April of that year. So when I talk about having done the media circuit and watching the minister do the media circuit in December, that's fully eight months after the questions in this House were answered by Minister Matthews in such a way as to give my colleague hope there would be some kind of an investigation. Clearly, there was not. The ball was dropped on Ornge, and the trail is absolutely clear. That's some of the experience that I had.

The nub of this bill, the one I could underscore as being of some relevance, is protection for whistle-blowers, which, I have to say, is not strong enough. My first experience with Ornge, which I've never really talked about in this House because that's not part of my file on a day-to-day basis, was to meet a fellow by the name of Jacob Blum, who turned out to be one of the prime witnesses before the public accounts committee here. And if there were actually to be a select committee, which we still think there should be, he would obviously be a prime person there as well because he helped author the performance agreement, because he essentially recruited Dr. Mazza, because he helped run Ornge for many years until he got to a point in his life where, by his own admission, he could no longer go on with what he was experiencing.

How did I know him? I met him with my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora because Mr. Blum lives in Thornhill, my riding, and wanted to know who to come to as a whistle-blower and, at that time, had not been identified and asked for secrecy because he was concerned about the aspects of whistle-blowing and what might happen in the event that he revealed information—

information in his case which turned out to be extremely valuable and useful in going forward.

The current government's handling of the Ornge air ambulance services is simply another example of the Liberals' inability to properly oversee large and complex files, resulting in inadequate public service and improper use of taxpayer funds. We've seen it time and again. We saw it in eHealth. We saw the about-face of Premier McGuinty literally weeks after being elected, with the health premium. We're seeing it now with the handling of the Mississauga and Oakville power plants, which obviously will have more discussion in this chamber in the days and weeks to come, for sure.

The bottom line is, if you give it to this government, somehow or other it either doesn't get done, there are delays in getting it done, and in the end you wind up with something that I can only describe as a cover-up. At the end of the day, what else can you use by way of terms to describe what we're hearing and what we're seeing here today? So, Bill 50: too little, too late and a band-aid.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My colleague, the new member from Kitchener–Waterloo, was correct in her earlier comments. Where the public is not allowed in, not allowed to actually access documents through freedom of information, we run into difficulties. Organizations feel themselves above scrutiny. Mr. Speaker, you are well aware and everyone in this Legislature is well aware what that has meant for the people of Ontario and our air ambulance service. The new member was quite correct. When hospitals came under freedom-of-information scrutiny, they opened documents to the public. It has been much too long, Speaker. People who were willing to come forward risked their careers and risked their jobs by telling the people of Ontario, the legislators of Ontario, what was really going on. They deserve protection. They're going to get protection in this bill. But frankly, Speaker, they should have had protection all along.

In our party, we're worried that this government is not learning from history, that a failure to learn from a practice of covering things up is going to result in further damage to the well-being of the people of this province. If we look at what's happening in Toronto with the privatization of the Eglinton light rail transit, why is that being privatized? Why is that not made a public entity, subject to scrutiny, subject to openness and subject to freedom of information?

Speaker, it is as if everything we learned in our experience with Ornge has been forgotten. This bill has been brought forward to, in some limited way, address those problems. Things need to be far farther ranging.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci, monsieur le Président. Ça me fait plaisir de m'adresser à la Chambre encore une fois pour parler d'Ornge.

I'm pretty perturbed to see that the Ontarians who need the help right now were put in such a situation by

creating an organization that did not live up to the very demanding job they had to do. This structure was put together between 2002 and 2003. In the structure, they made sure that this organization was very independent, independent from any government that will come into place.

I'm very surprised to see that my friend my critic from Thornhill doesn't want to have any organization or to give the power to the minister to oversee this organization, or to give whistle-blowers all the protection that a whistle-blower needs.

I commend the new member from Kitchener-Waterloo for her comment. Yes, that's true. I always think that the best test is to put yourself in the situation. If you were that person that needed to be transported to a hospital—and sometimes not the hospital in the area because the health is so critical that you need to be transported by air ambulance. Like I said, when you are transported by air ambulance, your situation is pretty bad.

The best thing to correct, if the bill is not completely perfect, is to go before the committee, and everybody will have their input to make sure that the bill is solid and that we don't see these situations coming forward anymore.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Merci, monsieur le Président. Je remercie mon confrère le député de Thornhill. I think he has been right on the ball saying this is a band-aid solution. Basically, the Minister of Health had all the powers in the world to look after this fiasco at Ornge and failed to do so. She was negligent in her duties. He related to his business as a CEO; I'm going to relate to mine as an owner of a business. If I had an employee who was as negligent in her duties as much as the Minister of Health was with Ornge, she would have been fired long, long ago and it would be without further debate.

Premier McGuinty has failed in his duties. He's letting his cabinet ministers run amok with incompetencies. In fact, even if you're obeying Mr. McGuinty, he'll throw you under the bus in an instant, as we've seen with the gas power plants. Minister Bentley has very much been under the bus for a while now. I don't understand why the backbenchers are supporting this cabinet decision to ignore issues like Ornge and like eHealth, when in fact at the next moment Mr. McGuinty would pretty much throw them under the bus in order to retain his power.

But what we've really got to look at here is, as he said, a band-aid solution. This is nothing more than the government trying to scramble and divert attention away from the real issue: that we need a select committee on Ornge, which this House motioned and which we should have in motion right now, and it has been totally ignored by the government of this day.

1630

To make further insult, the fact that they've shut down committees, that we can't even have further discussion on Ornge—I just don't understand what this government

is hiding and why they want to continue to block this discovery on this Ornge issue and why they continue to support their Premier, who has been negligent in his duties, and a health minister, who should resign.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: When I saw the Liberals come forward with this bill I was, for a moment, hopeful. I thought that there would be some serious consideration that the government would take a close look at the problem and offer a real solution. So I was hopeful, but what I saw was a bill that missed the mark absolutely.

It's easy to correct a specific mistake. Ornge had some specific problems; to correct that, anyone could do that. What I wanted to see was a long-term solution, a sustainable solution, so that future Ornges would not occur. We don't want to just correct this one problem, this one example of something completely avoidable, something that was easy to detect very early, something with many red flags and warning signs that were provided to the government by members of the public and employees, that this could have been avoided.

I was hoping that the government would put in place a policy or laws and regulations that this government would guarantee its role as providing oversight and providing real accountability as a government that should hold each and every precious dollar, each precious resource for our health care system, and treat it as such—treat it precious and seriously, and ensure that any dollar spent on any transfer agency should be held accountable and should ensure that the agency is providing effective and efficient care.

That's not what we're seeing. We don't see anything in this bill that will help prevent future Ornges from happening in the future. That's what we needed to see, and it has been sorely missing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I want to get a couple more things on the record because we only spoke for 10 minutes. The Liberals would like people to believe that they didn't know, that they found out when we found out about what was going on at Ornge.

A couple of things that need note:

—April 14, 2008: Keith Walmsley, former senior business analyst at Ornge, alerted Margaret Best, former Minister of Health Promotion, of deceitful business practices, including two accounting books to hide a \$5-million surplus from the ministry;

—November 14, 2008: Best forwarded Walmsley's letters to a senior official at health, who then forwarded the letter to the Ministry of Finance. Two investigators visited Ornge. Walmsley received a reply. It stopped there;

—January 2011: Ornge board chair Rainer Beltzner sent a letter to Health Minister Matthews and senior officials in the Premier's office that laid out in great detail plans to use public funds for Ornge's for-profit business ventures.

I could go on. There are several more. The point I'm trying to make here is a continuation of points that I and other members have raised in this debate and that have to be raised because this bill purports to address problems and deficiencies that resulted in the difficulties at Ornge that were illuminated there, when it doesn't—it doesn't even begin to address them, much less find a way to fix them.

These incidents that are outlined and that I've just read into the record occurred years before the Ornge scandal, in its robustness, was ever out in the public sphere, was ever debated in this chamber or was ever the subject of question period.

This is about a minister who didn't take responsibility. In fact, it's about successive health ministers who didn't take responsibility. That's why we have this bill. It purports to be the patch that is going to fix all. It doesn't do that. It's like everything else that we get from them; it just doesn't work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to just apologize: I have a cold today, so I might drag a little bit. Sorry about that.

I'm pleased to debate Bill 50—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I don't self-medicate—An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services.

It's been a while since this bill—I guess it first came out March 21, and I remember sitting here when the member from Newmarket—Aurora spoke. He gave a great speech; I refer you all to Hansard to reread it when you get the chance because he hit on some pretty good notes. But one thing that rings my bell is that this bill is nothing but a red herring, as he put it. If you go back to what was going on in March, we were struggling to get this government to form the select committee on Ornge. Every day in the news it was about how they weren't forming this select committee, and every day in question period was about, "Where is the select committee?" The majority of this House, the will of the House, voted in support of it, and the government has ignored it. So the red herring is, "Well, let's throw a bill on the table to say we're going to deal with the whole Ornge scandal and prevent it from occurring any further," and get rid of this public display that they're not really following the will of this House.

To the government's credit, it worked until Frank Klees spoke about it and put out on the table the fact that this is a red herring, and this bill is actually doing nothing because the Minister of Health has all the powers already that this bill states. As noted here, the minister has the power to intervene at Ornge under the original Ornge performance agreement. It's already in the agreement that they have. The minister, if she was feeling that she wanted to do her job, would have intervened and taken care of the scandal instead of blaming previous health ministers from the Liberal government that started the scandal. It doesn't matter who started it. If you're in

charge, it's up to you to find the scandal and deal with it, especially when a year and a half earlier Frank Klees had given her notice that something was wrong at Ornge and it was purely ignored until the Toronto Star decided to run something. I don't know; maybe the Toronto Star should be the official opposition, because the government tends to listen to unelected media as opposed to the elected opposition of this House. Maybe they should start listening to it.

The other thing is, the Independent Health Facilities Act gave her the ability to actually look into Ornge and deal with the board and deal with the illegal activities that were occurring, under that legislation.

But back to the select committee on Ornge. The fact that the government refused to form it is one thing, but, to go further, the government has not re-formed committees so that we can continue the investigation into Ornge. The public accounts committee is no longer in existence at this point because the government is having difficulties realizing this is a minority government, Mr. Speaker, and the fact that they shouldn't have a majority on all the committees. In fact, I don't think they should have a majority on any committee. It should be as it is in this Legislature.

We should have that committee up and running. I think what they're trying to do is prolong it so this issue dies, but the official opposition will not let this Ornge issue die because it's horrific, the amount of money that has been wasted by this government on this scandal. We're not going to let it die. We're going to keep on it until we come down to the final answers of who knew what and when and who is responsible. Obviously, the government is not taking any responsibility from this Ornge scandal. Otherwise, the Minister of Health would have resigned or been fired.

The other fact is that if, in fact, this committee was intact, this Premier would not even sit in front of the committee to answer questions of what he knew about this scandal. I think that says a lot about the Premier: the fact that his backbench is there rooting for him and saying whatever he wants to say and the fact that he's not going to support them at the same time and come forward and be truthful to the people of Ontario about what occurred in Ornge under his tutelage.

The other problem I have with this bill is the whistleblower protection that has been brought up. Sylvia Jones here—we passed a motion in the House before we had the select committee that would have given full whistleblower protection for anybody that came in front of the select committee on Ornge, to protect them. We've heard stories—and even Mr. Klees has been attacked in the public, trying to ruin his integrity out there—that if you're coming out with the truth on an issue of billions of dollars that have been wasted due to this Ornge scandal, they're going to come after you and try to destroy you as a person. So we needed whistle-blower protection. This bill does not provide across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers, as it should. It imposes limits on which individuals are protected and who they can approach with

information. As stated earlier, perhaps a system should be set up where the Ombudsman is involved and able to intervene in and investigate the issues of Ornge, which again this bill fails to add into it.

1640

"The Ambulance Act is amended to allow providers of air ambulance services to be designated as 'designated air ambulance service providers.'" In reading the summary of the bill, it's not saying too much, other than that the Minister of Health is hoping that you turn the page on what we're discussing. We no longer want to talk about select committees on Ornge, and apparently we've got to debate again, even though this should have been debated and voted on before we rested for the summer. But the fact is they're now trying to get away from that there have been no committees formed.

Just to bring that up with the House leader, who should have been working to get the committee formed—the House leader has failed to do so. It's the same House leader who is the Minister of Community and Social Services, who closed down our ODSP office in St. Thomas without any consultation, without any financial savings to doing so. It's the same minister—he doesn't seem to want to work with people. He doesn't seem to want to try to find solutions. We're in a minority situation here, and the official government has got to start working with and listening to the opposition parties, because when you add it up together, we do have the majority on this side of the House. If you don't want to work with us, let alone set up a committee—which was passed in this House, to form a select committee. Instead, your answer is to throw up Bill 50, an act to amend the Ambulance Act. It's not worth much more than the paper it's written on, as I've said earlier.

The Minister of Health, at the start of this issue, when Frank Klees brought it up in April 2010, I believe—so it's almost two years ago. He said, "You have a problem with Ornge. I've got people coming to talk to me. They're afraid to talk to the ministry because there's no whistle-blowing protection"—and Mr. Klees isn't going to throw anybody under the bus. "You've got to do something about this issue that's come up." It's been totally ignored. Their solution to the Ornge scandal is Bill 50, to officially regulate what is already in the agreement with Ornge.

That's why I'm getting confused with this topic. I don't know why we're spending so much time on Bill 50; I don't know why the Minister of Health has not pushed the government to get a select committee on Ornge; I don't know why the Premier won't talk to the committee on public accounts; and I don't know why the government House leader will not form committees. It's blowing my mind away.

I was voted here last October. It's almost been a year. I swear, if my business ran like this government is running, we would be out of business in six months easily. I'm surprised they've lasted nine years. Obviously, we have a \$15-billion deficit heading towards a \$30-billion deficit, and our debt is \$200 billion, which they think is

good. Somehow, they can work out the statistics so that it comes out on top at the end of the day, but it's \$15 billion that we don't have that is pretty much being wasted. The eHealth figures: I think we're almost at \$2 billion; with Ornge, probably \$1 billion. The gas plants are adding up. We can get rid of your deficit for you pretty quick if you stop the scandals and start listening and working with the PC Party.

As the member from Thornhill said earlier, it's a band-aid solution. I don't even call it a band-aid solution; I think it's putting a band-aid on somebody else when the first person is bleeding, because it's not really going to deal with the issues. We could have dealt with it earlier; we didn't. The minister won't resign; she should. The Premier should take some responsibility and speak out about this; he hasn't.

This Bill 50 is really not going to be accomplishing too much other than going to committee—and if it makes it there, we're going to have to rework it. As I said before, we need to work on whistle-blowing protection. Sylvia Jones here worked really hard to get her motion passed. I wish the government would start listening to us because we can accomplish so much working together instead of them trying to hide their scandals.

I look forward to everyone else's comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The one thing that I keep bringing up with my questions and comments is about oversight and transparency. One thing this bill doesn't have is Ombudsman oversight. The Ombudsman that we have, Mr. Marin—I've talked to many MPPs and fellow colleagues. He is very well respected. The work that he's done in other areas that he has oversight in has certainly brought to light many recommendations, suggestions and solutions that actually make a ministry work better. I think this is part of what we should be looking at in committee seriously: having Ombudsman oversight. Mr. Marin has given us a lot of input on many occasions that helped improve the way a system is operated, and part of that transparency—if someone has an issue with that organization, there should be that investigation further so that the public feels that there is transparency that the government will be held accountable for.

So far, the government hasn't been accountable for the Ornge scandal. Even with the hearings, there have been many questions that haven't really been fully answered and that people are still wondering about. The fact that the Premier won't make an appearance is a little disturbing. We need to get to the bottom of Ornge and we need the actual full picture, and he's a piece of that puzzle that will give us the full picture of how this Ornge scandal got to this point and happened so long and cost the taxpayers dollars, but worst of all, cost lives. That's what we need to make sure, and I think that one of the important key pieces is having Ombudsman oversight in this bill. I hope that when it goes to committee we will have a serious consideration to make that happen. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the comments by the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London. I must take exception to him calling this act a red herring and implying that it does nothing substantive.

One of the things that the member from London-Fanshawe mentioned in her previous comments is section 7.3 of the act, whereby the minister can make unilateral changes to the performance agreement that we would hold with Ornge, and she was very concerned about this. I would suggest that she might want to talk to her colleague the member from Nickel Belt, because in fact at the Ornge committee hearings, that member raised the issue that the old performance agreement was very unusual in the health sector; that it, in fact, didn't give the ministry the authority to put new provisions into the act. This was one of the things that Lynne Golding's branch at Fasken put into the act or didn't put into the act—what is usually in a performance agreement, which is the ability for the ministry to impose new requirements as circumstances change.

The other thing, which is very substantive here, is the introduction of the ability to have a special investigator and then a supervisor. It's interesting; when you go back into the Fasken billings, you can see this conversation about, "Should Ornge be constituted under the Ambulance Act in which there is currently no provision for supervision—for investigation and supervision—or under the Independent Health Facilities Act, where there is?", as the previous minister mentioned. But their advice was—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to stand and talk, and comment on the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London. He brought some good points up.

It seems like a long time ago, but in March in this House—after being promised almost a year ago, before Christmas, that if the House voted for a select committee, this government would indeed put one in place—we did vote in March and they have done all they could to avoid that. We tried to put pressure on them to make them follow through on their promises, and as somebody who's been involved in politics for 18 years, I should have known that one thing this government does do is not follow its promises. And that's again what happened.

We see that there's quite a history here. The member from Thornhill talked about how they actually knew starting back in 2008 when they first started to hear of these issues, but they chose to ignore them. I'm sure you can connect the dots. And when the member from Aurora-Newmarket brought it up last April, then it became damage control and they didn't want information out before the election.

Now we see that all types of things are falling apart. With a minority government, there's just too great a chance or opportunity for the opposition parties to find out, and we see no shortage of scandals. Whether it be

Ornge, eHealth, the power plants, the Green Energy Act, they just keep escalating.

1650

It's sad, because this all comes down to oversight. I sat in on a couple of those committees where they were very clear, the management at Ornge, that this government did have oversight and they actually were kept very much abreast of what was going on and the changes. So, either they weren't listening, which I guess maybe that's the obvious answer, or they chose not to take the advice that they were given.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, just building on my earlier points, what I would like to see us, as legislators, do is, instead of always looking to fix a problem, I'd like to see us move towards preventing problems. How do we prevent expenses that are incurred? How do we prevent waste of precious resources? How do we prevent that waste?

There are a number of transfer agencies to whom we provide financing. There are a number of agencies that we are the sole provider of funding. Now, throughout this province, it is incumbent on the government to ensure that every dollar that is spent is spent efficiently and effectively.

What are we going to do now, moving forward, if someone complains about what goes on at a transfer agency? What are we going to do if an employee complains about some concerns regarding remuneration or complains about issues regarding patient care or complains about concerns around the expenditure of money? What are we going to do regarding questions asked by opposition members?

We know very well that the heart of the Ornge scandal was compensation regarding executives. That issue was raised in committee years ago by the opposition, by the leader of the NDP, Howard Hampton. He asked a number of questions, but there were no answers provided.

What will this government do, moving forward, to ensure that if questions are asked by opposition members, if questions are asked in committees, that those answers are provided, particularly when it comes to compensation, particularly when it's in regard to transfer payment agencies?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes the time for questions and comments, and we go back to the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London for his reply.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the members for London-Fanshawe, Guelph, Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry and Bramalea-Gore-Malton for their comments. It's always appreciative to hear addition to the debate.

As I said, I've called this bill a red herring—not in agreement. I can call it a distractor, a ploy, a gimmick, a manoeuvre, whatever you want to call it. What it was was to get our minds off the select committee on Ornge. It didn't work. It didn't work on this side. We're still

going to push for it. The Legislature spoke to that. We passed that we want this select committee on Ornge. No matter how hard they're going to push against us from forming it, we're going to keep at them.

But I think, foremost, we need to have committees formed so we can get the public accounts committee going again and get that committee working on finding the true details at Ornge and getting the Premier down there himself to let us know what he knew, when he knew, and why he didn't do anything to prevent this from occurring.

As I said before, this bill is lacking protection for whistle-blowers. We need to protect those who can come forward and bring out the truth that is being hidden through the various scandals. If we don't protect those who want to come forward, they're not going to come forward. They're going to be penalized for their actions, and we don't want that to happen. It's not fair; it's not right. We need to have that in place so that when they do come forward, they are protected.

Bill 50, we need to change the fact that—the power's already there. Why duplicate service? Why add an extra layer into the big book of law out there, of regulation? The Minister of Health has the power to do what she should have done and didn't do, and shame on her for doing that. Let's move on. Let's get this select committee on Ornge going. Let's find out what went wrong and take care of those who were in charge of this when it happened. They shouldn't still be there. It needs a change.

As Lisa MacLeod said, this government needs a change. They're old. Their ideas are done, and they're scandal-plagued.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Harris: It's my pleasure to provide more input on Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services.

I think today we've heard a common theme from this side, the official opposition, in referencing back to the member for Newmarket—Aurora and his proper name for the bill, that it's to be called the red herring bill, which I would agree with because truly what we have here is really nothing more than the McGuinty government's attempt to divert attention away from its failure to take action against Ornge despite the repeated warnings. There are clearly several layers of this, but they talk about the financial irregularities of it, the not-for-profit spinoffs.

I'll tell you, when I'm back in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, people ask me time and time again, "How did this even happen?" How do you have an institution like Ornge that is to provide front-line patient care when we need it the most—every time you see the Ornge ambulance in the air you kind of get a bit of a funny knot in your stomach because you know that that air ambulance was dispatched to a scene where Ontarians need it the most, whether it be a car accident or a heart attack. Time and time again you see them and you just kind of shudder.

People say, "How did money that should have been going to the front lines to help save lives, or precious seconds off lives when in need, get funneled to other areas, these spinoff companies that would really, truly profit or have members of the executive team profit?" It just is unbelievable.

That goes into the second point, the bloated executive salaries. I mean, \$1.5 million or \$1.4 million, whatever Dr. Chris Mazza was making—unbelievable. To think that the gentleman who runs some of our power plants—\$1.4 million. But a doctor who came from the civil service to the hospitals, into Ornge, making several hundreds of thousands of dollars a year—to have his salary increase tenfold is just unbelievable. When we heard from front-line workers at Ornge how there were cuts happening to save money, it just didn't make sense.

I, for one, listened and heard, through the good work of the committee, an interview with the director of HR who was on a contract, who was making a ridiculous sum of money while still working for other people—even employed her daughter, I believe. Or you've got Dr. Mazza, who hired his girlfriend to come in and have some sort of director's job, and she was a ski instructor. I mean, it's just unbelievable. These things don't happen in the real world.

I'll tell you, I came from the private sector because I felt there was a need for private sector type experience that measured our results each and every day. We went to work and were measured by our results, not statements of good intentions. I'll tell you, I worked for a big company—tens of thousands of employees. This type of nonsense would never survive in the real world out there. People look at this and they're like, "What the heck is going on? Who is driving the ship here? Is there actually anybody on board in the driver's seat? Who is driving this thing?" It's just ridiculous.

Then I go into the operational deficiencies, and that's truly the story that people are often hearing about that makes us most upset. Actually, there was an incident back in November in my neck of the woods at the Waterloo region airport. I'll read you just a synopsis of a report that actually went to cabinet: "Claims of a delay in air ambulance response to a private helicopter crash. This call generated significant local media attention. One person deceased."

However, the coroner notified—in his comments:

"(1) The evidence obtained identified that due to the launch policy that was in effect at the Ornge communications centre at the time of this incident, there was a delay in the provision of emergency air ambulance response.

"(2) Flight paramedic did not promptly assess the male patient as per the BLS standards.

"(3) Flight paramedic did not promptly assess the male patient as per the BLS standards.

"(4) There was an eight-minute and 25 second delay contacting the BHP to receive a trauma TOR for the female patient."

That's one troubling example.

1700

But I'll tell you, when I read the report, I was almost in tears; I probably was when I was at home reading this. An incident back on July 15: "While en route to an on-scene rotary-wing request, the CCP notified Sudbury CACC he was unable to perform CPR on the AW139 and would have to accompany the patient in the land ambulance. The patient subsequently was declared dead."

One other instance, province-wide, July 22: "The OCC created new policy delaying the launch of a rotary-wing air ambulance to scene calls if a land ambulance can be on scene within 10 minutes and if at that time a land paramedic determined there was a need for air ambulance only then would the OCC launch...."

It's just simply troubling when taxpayers have footed the bill to an extent of \$750 million, and you read of instances like this with state-of-the-art equipment—or what should have been state-of-the-art equipment, but actually, at the end of the day, didn't allow for paramedics to perform proper CPR in brand new aircraft. It's like buying a car without seat belts or buying a Mini that you couldn't get into. It's unbelievable to think that when you need the service the most, whether it be an accident or what have you, to know that perhaps you're seconds closer to getting to the hospital—or minutes—that life matters so much, to be told the air ambulance couldn't take you because you couldn't perform CPR in it? Could you imagine if your son or daughter—I'm the father of a new seven-month-old and I guess I have a bit of a different perspective on life now because I watch him, and others need to fend for him right now. I can't even imagine, as a parent, being told, "We can't take your son or daughter because we can't perform CPR in these brand new helicopters." It's just truly unbelievable.

So that goes back to the operational deficiencies, which all lead to worst-case scenarios at Ornge, and that's the compromising of patient care. That's truly what happened. To that extent, it's truly the failure of the Minister of Health, in my opinion and I believe the official opposition's opinion, to step in and ensure that there was proper oversight to the Ontario air ambulance service.

We've in fact pointed questions at the Minister of Finance to provide proper oversight in terms of the finances being doled out year after year. We repeatedly attempted to get the Premier's attention on this file because we know that the Premier was properly briefed on the issue and has done nothing. We've called for the Premier to come to committee to explain what he has known on this issue, and he has refused to come to committee, which is a shame for democracy.

As my colleagues have stated earlier, it seems like the only time this government pays attention is when they get the morning paper the next day. The total disregard for the official opposition, when we bring these concerns forward, to ignore, ignore, ignore, only to see the paper the next morning—to finally do something or pretend to do something about it. I'll tell you, folks, tomorrow morning I think they'll get tuned into the role of the official

opposition, yes they will. This Speaker already had a bit of a say to that just recently when, in committee, a cabinet minister, the Minister of Energy, refused to provide the proper documents that members of this House expected and are in need of. So I think we'll have more to say on that tomorrow and the fact that hopefully the government will take notice to the official opposition before they go down that slippery slope of, shall I say, contempt, in the near future.

I know we just have a few short moments left, but I do believe that the Minister of Health has shown a great deal of discredit to her office by defending her role and by insisting she had no authority. Where does the buck stop? People say to me, "Who is in charge around here?" If the health minister has the ability to say she has no oversight or control or authority over Ornge, who does? Is it the finance minister? Is it the Premier? All the more reason for the Premier to show up to committee and explain himself on this. It's just unbelievable—\$750 million. There is a pattern emerging here. I'll hopefully be able to continue to talk about it in my two-minute hit, but I thank you, Speaker, for that opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Just to build on some of my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga's comments around the accountability piece, those are real questions that the public has about where the money went, how the salaries increased and who was actually making the decisions. We saw over 60 witnesses. At the end of that process we had more questions than answers, which was disturbing. It did not build confidence from a public perspective.

If the question is, "How are we going to solve this issue?"—as one of my fellow colleagues said, this is a systemic issue—there's no silver bullet, there's no one-off. And yet there are still things missing from this proposed bill, namely the FOI and the Ontario Ombudsman not having that oversight with regard to Ornge. Ornge will continue to be an organization that cannot be called to government agencies. That's our responsibility as a House: to oversee and to ensure that money is being spent properly, to ensure that the mandate of that organization is actually being met. I think we see that there are gaps in this proposed bill. Finally, this bill cannot obscure the fact that the Ministry of Health has refused to look at their own role in this entire experience.

Those are very real questions that the public has around who was making decisions at the end of the day, where the responsibility is, where the accountability is. This needs to go to committee.

I've been asking my colleagues, "When is this going to go to committee?" because I'm new. There are no committees set up. How are we going to do our jobs? How are we going to work with the government to actually make this bill truly accountable, truly actionable? Yet no committees have been set up. So I think there is a disconnect between the goals and the objectives of this proposed bill and the work that we need to get accomplished on behalf of the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I was listening to the comments made by the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, and I have to say that if we are here with this bill, it is because we realized some changes are needed. When I hear from the opposition that they are happy the bill is here but they would like some changes or improvements, I do hope so. I think we all look for some improvements.

There is never a bill introduced to the House that is 100% perfect or anyone who has ever brought or will ever bring a bill that doesn't require some oversight, some changes. So I'm pleased to see that the bill will go on and receive the attention it deserves, because at the end we all want the same thing. The bill is here for one major reason: We all want the best health care provision for our people, all the people in Ontario. There is no question with respect to that. I don't believe there is any member who doesn't want to see this done in such a way that in the end the best will be provided and delivered to the people of Ontario.

As I said before, the minister is in agreement; the speakers are in agreement. We have acted upon the recommendation of the Auditor General's report, and that is why we are here debating this particular bill today. While I'm pleased to see that the members are making a contribution to the content of the bill as it is, we would love to see it, yes, with some improvements. After all, even the bill as it is makes a number of good recommendations, and I think we have to take that into consideration and say, "Okay, it may not be exactly what we would like to see in the bill, but it gives us a beginning, where to start, and we hope to improve it as we move on."

I thank you, Speaker, for your time again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Just to follow up on the comments from the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, if there is any value in this debate, it's making it increasingly clear that we're not there yet. Really, confusion continues to reign with respect to who is at fault. We heard mention that 55 or 60 people have testified. Many come forward and defend the corporation; others, insiders, come forward and criticize the corporation. Some indicate that the government knew exactly what was going on. Government members come forward and seem to suggest that they did not know what was going on, that there was not the apparent oversight that you would expect in an entity that had been created—especially such a convoluted myriad of, essentially, divisions and people reporting to other people. We're not there yet, Speaker.

1710

One presentation—this would be Mr. Apps, the former Liberal Party of Canada president, a lawyer; he was there to defend the organization—made it very clear to our committee, the public accounts committee, that the government did know what was going on. Just digging into my notes, I'll quote Mr. Apps and his insistence:

"The government was thoroughly, painstakingly and, in all cases, truthfully briefed in advance of Ornge taking any of these actions." Now, we hear the opposite from government members. We have to get to the bottom of this. We have at least one elected member who should come before that committee. If he doesn't, I consider that contempt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I'm going to go back to the point that was raised by the new member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I note a number of people are here in the Legislature today watching the debate, and I want to point out to them and those who are watching on television that this debate is going on in a situation where, even if we voted in the next 15 minutes or the next 10 minutes to proceed with this bill in committee, there are no committees to receive it. The business of this Legislature cannot go forward.

Here in this chamber, we talk to this point and that; we try to make things clear to the audience and clear to you, Speaker. But in the end, our wheels are simply spinning because there is no mechanism beyond this chamber to actually take the bill, have public hearings and amend the bill so that it responds to the needs that have been identified. This government needs to sit down with the opposition and with the third party, strike the committees and get on with the business of the House. It's as simple as that, Speaker—simple as that.

My colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has made an important point—and it needs to be made in committee—that it is not enough just to correct the problems in the air ambulance service. If we don't deal with the structural issues that bedevil this government, then the sorts of scandal, waste and risk to human life that we saw with Ornge, we will see throughout the public service. That is the greatest weakness of this bill and the greatest weakness of this Legislature right now: It's not set up to actually do business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments, and we return to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to, first off, thank the newest member of the Legislature and my colleague from the region of Waterloo, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, Ms. Catherine Fife. Thank you for your comments on that—and of course, York West for chiming in, as well as my colleagues from Haldimand–Norfolk and Toronto–Danforth.

Quickly, just to build off what the member for Haldimand–Norfolk was saying in terms of the committee work that he did and the testimony of Alfred Apps, the former Liberal Party president, that the government did know—truly disturbing. That also goes to the point that the members for both Kitchener–Waterloo and Toronto–Danforth spoke about, and that's the structural issues.

I would say to you, we actually have those structural issues already today running rampant throughout government. The trend has already emerged. Whether it's the

Ministry of Health with regard to eHealth, \$2.4 billion wasted with five million Ontarians still without an electronic health record today; the recent announcement of the chopping of the diabetes registry that would affect and help 1.2 million Ontarians with diabetes, or the recent announcement of the cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville power plants, those structural issues are running rampant through government today. It's just truly unfortunate. That's why we call this bill the "red herring bill," because that is simply what it is, along with a lot of the other items that our caucus colleagues here in the official opposition mentioned.

It's unfortunate that we're having to talk about this again and again, but like I said, those trends are emerging, and we hope that there will be changes in the near future. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to rise on second reading debate for Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services.

We've spent a lot of time in this Legislature talking about the Ornge scandal, which I think is a tremendous black mark on the McGuinty government. Before I provide comments on this bill or on why we're here today, I want to—and I know that a number of my colleagues have done this—express my condolences to the families who lost loved ones because of the ineffectiveness of this Legislature and of Ornge to handle themselves. We had countless stories where family members lost their loved ones because of this government's inability to deal with Ornge.

A lot of people have criticized our party for ringing bells in the Legislature and stopping legislation. I remember, like it was yesterday, the Minister of Health standing up in question period and professing on the Ornge situation that she would abide by the will of the Legislature. I felt that, in a minority Parliament, I would take her at her word, that if we could have some consensus on how to move forward, she, more than any other person, would agree to that. I felt very proud when the opposition parties got together and passed the motion regarding the creation of a select committee to deal with and investigate this horrific scandal in the province of Ontario regarding Ornge. To many Ontarians' shock, the government totally backed away from that acceptance of a select committee.

I know that constituents in my riding and ridings all across the province look to us, the 107 members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Their expectation is that we will act in an accountable and transparent manner to get to the bottom of this scandal. We owe it to those people who have lost family members because of Ornge's inability to have a product in the air that would look after our loved ones.

For this government to continually block, at every possible step, to have a select committee to get to the bottom of it is shameful. It's absolutely shameful that this government would not accept the will of the Legislature

in a minority Parliament—the fact that we here in the opposition have more seats than you do so that you could take that and move forward on that recommendation. It's a sad day that you allowed us to get here today.

This bill was presented in March. Many members on the government side would stand up and say, "This is what we need. We need Bill 50." Every time they wanted to divert attention to the story on why we hadn't created a select committee or why the bells were ringing, they pointed to Bill 50. They didn't necessarily call Bill 50 to be debated. They called a lot of other bills. This item, if you really look at it, if you really read the pages of this piece of legislation, you'll realize that there's nothing here that is substantive enough to answer those questions for families.

1720

Interjection: They won't even debate it.

Mr. Steve Clark: Their own members aren't standing up to defend this piece of legislation and why it's so important.

The Premier himself, time after time after time, thumbed his nose at appearing at the committee. Why is he held at a different standard than any other person who came to the public accounts committee? When he was asked to clear the air as Premier of the province of Ontario, to let people know what his involvement was in this Ornge operation, with his fuzzy recollection of when he met Chris Mazza, or when he didn't meet Mr. Mazza, or of the hundreds of millions of dollars—taxpayers' dollars—that were wasted at Ornge, I would think the Premier of the province would want to appear, that he would want himself to be held to the same standard of Chris Mazza, who appeared, Alfred Apps, who appeared. The list goes on and on. But the Premier would not appear. Day after day in this Legislature—I asked the question when we came back, Speaker. I think it was early September. There was no mention of why or the reasons. In fact, he would always defer. It was like a Ping-Pong match between the Premier, the Minister of Health and the government House leader.

I have to tell you, the government House leader should not be so quick to get to his feet to defend the government. He has single-handedly ground this Legislature to a halt with his inability to get committees appointed and his inability to even get the most simple piece of legislation that has all-party support through committee. He is a failure in that role.

This government and the opposition cannot function without those committees to deal with this legislation. If we collapsed debate, which we've done on other bills, and allowed it to go to committee—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Where does it go?

Mr. Steve Clark: It goes into the black hole. My friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke asked the question.

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: Others call it the red-herring bill. This bill goes nowhere without a committee system. The

government's inability to manage the minority is yet another disgrace among so many.

I spoke a couple of weeks ago and went through, item by item, what pieces of legislation—I was actually lucky that, in the early session of Parliament, I had an early private member's business ballot spot so that I could have consensus on Major-General Sir Isaac Brock Day. I'm certainly glad locally that I was able to get that bill passed. But if that's the only type of legislation we can manage in a minority, how in the heck are we ever going to clean up the Ornge scandal? We certainly aren't going to do it with Bill 50. We need the government to come clean. We need them to work with the opposition parties and get to the real story. Bill 50 does not do it.

The last thing we need is to abdicate responsibility as members of the Legislative Assembly, to abdicate our responsibility through this bill to give more powers to the minister, to cabinet, and also to have very weak whistleblower protection. I think if we learned anything from this Ornge scandal, we want to make sure that we stand up and protect those people who come forward.

I'll tell you, anyone who watched this debate and watched some of the testimony at the public accounts committee really wants that work to continue. They want to make sure that Ontarians can look at Premier McGuinty, the front bench of the McGuinty cabinet and certainly the government House leader and feel that they have—for those people who have passed away under the care of Ornge, I think they all need to have those questions answered.

I really think, in addition to Bill 50, if the government really wanted to show some confidence in dealing with this minority Parliament, then they would put this bill aside, resurrect that recommendation that had support from the majority of people in the Legislative Assembly and move forward with an all-party select committee to get to the bottom of this and to also have the Premier come clean.

I think people want to know why hundreds of millions of dollars were wasted under Premier McGuinty's watch. I think they really want to know why he has such a fuzzy memory of how many times he met Chris Mazza. What did they discuss? What were some of the conversations that took place? But I think we all have to, again, try to make sure we have as much transparency and accountability as possible.

Bill 50 is just a shell of a bill. It simply is cover for the Minister of Health and for this government on what they haven't done.

Even if we went to committee and tried to amend it to provide more whistle-blowing protection, there's no place for it to go. It's that black hole that shows the failings of this government, the failings of Dalton McGuinty, of John Milloy, of Deb Matthews and of every single one of those members across the way. They've let down those Ontarians and let—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

It does seem appropriate to remind members that we refer to our colleagues by their riding name as opposed to their surname.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I went down to my office, and I dug out the Auditor General's report because some of the facts in here are so interesting and intriguing: how an operation like Ornge could have continued so long without the triggers and flags coming a lot closer and a lot faster to this Legislature until recently.

One of the things that was interesting is, in 2010, Ornge logged 60 public complaints and 500 staff concerns, which included operational issues of varying degrees and importance; here we are in 2010. I understand, that a previous member from the NDP asked the question in 2010, along with the member opposite recently in 2011, I believe. If I'm wrong on those dates, I apologize. So the flags were there as well as the numerous complaints from 500 staff.

Part of the issue was that the ministry investigated 15 complaints a year. Since Ornge became responsible for providing air ambulance services in Ontario in 2006, they investigated 15 of those complaints. However, in October 2010, it stopped recommending ways for Ornge to address issues, stating that such decisions were Ornge's responsibility. Also, another issue that came to light was that when Ornge investigated problems, serious complaints, it did not share their results with the ministry unless the ministry was investigating the same complaint.

So I hope that when we take this to committee, some of these suggestions or concerns from the Auditor General—he did make a recommendation that there basically be an audit done by the ministry periodically of Ornge to ensure that these complaints are being dealt with correctly and proficiently so that there is accountability to the public and so that these things can improve on service in life and death situations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I am quite happy to be able to comment on a number of speakers.

I think the member from London—Fanshawe quite rightly brings up the Auditor General's report, because we seem to keep getting farther and farther away from that. That is, after all, what public accounts is supposed to be dealing with, the Auditor General's report. She quite properly mentions the concern that the Auditor General had about the reporting by Ornge of various incidents to the Ministry of Health. That's a problem; she's absolutely correct.

In the new performance agreement, which has now been signed by the ministry, that has been corrected so that Ornge is now required within the new performance agreement to report all such instances to the Ministry of Health so that the Ministry of Health can have full information. That was not the case with the old performance agreement, which was originally written back in 2003.

1730

In terms of some of the incidents which the members from Kitchener-Conestoga and Leeds-Grenville have spoken of, the initial reaction of the coroner was that they did not result in Ornge-related deaths. The coroner has said that with some of the new information that is coming forward, he will review all the Ornge-related incidents, and I think it would behoove us to wait for that report. But I do know that in the specific one that the member from Kitchener-Conestoga mentioned, in fact the finding of the coroner was that there was a far longer delay than—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Harris: I want to commend my colleague from Leeds-Grenville for bringing up some very valid points with us. I don't get how the folks on the other side—how the member from Guelph continues to defend that government, her government, with this mess at Ornge.

I'll tell you, he talked about getting to the real story of things. You know what? They talked a lot about the ringing of the bells back some time ago, and that's because in this Legislature we had a vote on calling for a select committee. Guess who voted against that? You guys did; you did. How do you tell the folks in your constituencies that you don't want to get to the bottom of examples like this? I'll read it—because we're speaking for those folks up in Sudbury. I'll give you an example of this.

"It was found that due to the interior of the AW139, which was designed by Ornge staff, continuous quality CPR could not be performed in accordance with BLS" strategy. "It was also found that patients in respiratory distress could not be provided with appropriate patient care..."

I'll tell you again and again, that is why the official opposition have called for a select committee, as the member from Leeds-Grenville said, to get to the bottom of this. Folks on that side want this to go away. I don't blame them. But we speak for the families who have experienced the structural deficiencies of Ornge, and if we don't get to the bottom of it, it will continue to happen again and lives will be lost because of it.

You know what? You can stand up and defend all you want, and that's again why the Premier should be dragged into committee and do his responsibility and tell Ontarians the truth, which he refuses to do—to come to committee, that is.

Getting back again to my colleague from Leeds-Grenville, getting to the real story is what this is about. This bill does nothing to address those real concerns, especially those structural concerns, and we will continue to speak for those families like the ones in Sudbury who have experienced those—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Throughout this debate, I want to make one thing clear on behalf of the New Democratic

Party of Ontario: We stand very firmly behind the front-line workers of Ornge and the excellent work that they do. Our concern has always been in the management and in the oversight that this government did not provide.

When we look at Ornge, this problem doesn't lie squarely at the feet of someone like Dr. Mazza. Dr. Mazza is not required to be responsible to this province. He has no obligation or duty to care for the precious dollars of our taxpayers. It's the government that is responsible. It's the government that has the responsibility to oversee money spent. There could be hundreds of Dr. Mazzas across this province. Those individuals will come and go, but the government will stay, and that's why it's important that the government provide the oversight, that the government be accountable for every cent, every dollar that's spent.

I ask: Why were some key elements that my colleagues have brought up left out when we're talking about accountability? Why was it that freedom-of-information issues were left out? Why was it that the Ombudsman oversight accountability piece was left out? Why were these essential elements of oversight left out when it's the government's responsibility to provide this oversight? Why were they purposely left out? It begs the question: If this government is serious about being accountable, is serious about being transparent, then why were these key elements left out? These questions are left on our minds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. We return to the member for Leeds-Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the member for London-Fanshawe, the member for Guelph, the member for Kitchener-Conestoga and also the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

To the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton, who asked the question, "When is the government going to get serious about accountability and transparency?", they're not going to get serious. I think that was a good question, but clearly, by putting up this bill—and all you have to do is, if you've been following the Ornge scandal, read the explanatory note and you'll realize that the bill has got nothing to do with accountability. It's got nothing to do with transparency. All it is is political cover for the government opposite and the Minister of Health. It was pretty clear during the debates, when we asked for a select committee, when we asked for Premier Dalton McGuinty to appear so we could get to the bottom of it, that this government opposite has no intention of coming clean to the people of Ontario. They should be ashamed of themselves.

I'm glad that the member for Kitchener-Conestoga mentioned that poor family in Sudbury. I know the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke had a lady pass away from the Round Lake area—tragic cases that I believe could have been prevented with the necessary oversight that we're talking about in the Progressive Conservative caucus.

I hope that as the debate continues this afternoon—and we won't be finished this afternoon—the government

will make some serious changes to their approach when it comes to this situation and also take the time to establish committees so that if we did pass this legislation we'd have something to bring it forward to, so that we could actually have some meaningful debate, so that we could have some public input. But again, the problem with the government opposite is, they can't manage the minority. They're out of touch and they're out of gas. I wouldn't be surprised if the Premier resigned—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to add a few comments to this debate with respect to Bill 50. Many speakers have spoken this afternoon about a number of areas, about some of the outstanding problems at Ornge—millions of dollars unaccounted for, millions of dollars spent on helicopters, particularly, that weren't properly designed, and where even basic medical care like CPR could not be performed. It's hard to imagine how that could have happened. And then again, there were millions of dollars spent on questionable things like speedboats and motorcycles and giving jobs to people who were way over their heads. And then of course there was Dr. Mazza's compensation of over a million dollars—\$1.4 million, I believe—to be the chief of the air ambulance service.

But what I'm going to choose to speak about just briefly here is the real lack of whistle-blower protection in Bill 50. That was one of the primary concerns that we identified very early on, and one of the things that the minister, I know, when she introduced this bill into the Legislature, was very clear about: how she wanted to protect people who came forward.

I'd just like to quote, actually, from the Hansard of April 25, I believe it is, at the beginning of second reading debate, where the Minister of Health said this: "Allow me now to address the amendments to the Ambulance Act being proposed today. These amendments will further entrench stronger oversight and prevent abuses of power at Ontario's air ambulance service. It is vitally important that employees do not feel intimidated when raising concerns. That's why our proposed legislation will protect whistle-blowers at Ornge who disclose information to an inspector, an investigator or the government."

Well, far from creating the kind of protection that we need to see, Bill 50 is entirely inadequate with respect to whistle-blower protection. It's section 7.7 that deals with the so-called protection, and it basically says that no one should intimidate someone. But it doesn't say anything about penalties; it doesn't say anything about what the ramifications are going to be of that. It just says you shouldn't do it.

That is clearly inadequate to deal with the kinds of problems that we've seen at Ornge, where we saw a real culture of fear and intimidation that was built up over a couple of years, to the point where people with very legitimate concerns felt that they could not come forward.

And it's not only that. I did have the ability to sit in on some of the public accounts hearings, and we heard about one of the helicopter pilots based out of Thunder Bay, Mr. Bruce Wade, who appeared before public accounts, I believe, on July 31. He ended up writing a letter to public accounts shortly after that and basically said—this is from Bruce Wade, Ornge rotor pilot, Thunder Bay:

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"Dear Sir:

"I regret I must inform the committee that after testifying at public accounts on July 31, Ornge suspended me with pay effective August 2.

"Ornge has convened an investigation into allegations filed by the author of the fixed-wing letter read to the committee. The Office and Professional Employees International Union ... is representing me for this investigation.

"I will update the committee of any additional actions from Ornge."

How coincidental was that, Mr. Speaker, that within only a few days of giving negative evidence before the public accounts committee, Mr. Wade was suspended?

Subsequently, the committee did hear from Mr. Wade again. This is the note that he wrote this time:

"Attached below dated August 10 is my notice to the committee chair about being suspended by Ornge after my testimony at public accounts. As of August 21, I was informed my suspension has been extended to September 9. Ornge claimed in two separate news articles that my suspension had nothing to do with my testimony. Proof of a premeditated plan to deter me from testifying in the form of an email from the author of the fixed-wing letter read to the committee was presented to a third party investigator on August 10. That email was sent to many fixed-wing pilots, it outlined his actions, reasons for his actions being me called to testify and encouragement to other fixed-wing pilots to follow his lead.

"I refer you to the second-last paragraph of the 'notice for witnesses appearing before Standing Committee on Public Accounts', which for your convenience, I have copied here:

"'Tampering with a witness or in any way attempting to deter a witness from giving evidence at a committee meeting may constitute a breach of privilege. Similarly, any interference with or threats against witnesses who have already testified may be treated as a breach of privilege by the assembly.'

"To whom should the email evidence of the plan of action against me be presented? Would the committee consider such premeditated deterrence actions a matter of serious nature? Could this be considered a criminal investigation? I would hope all those found to be involved in this action against me to be held to account; I have reason to believe this goes past the author of the fixed-wing letter. In my opinion, given the plan to deter me from testifying and the actions which have ensued, anything from the author of the fixed-wing letter to the committee as well as any discussion or credence to that letter should be stricken from the Hansard record.

"I gave truthful testimony to the committee from start to finish and not one single word of my testimony has been refuted because they cannot"—again, from Mr. Wade.

Subsequently we heard Mr. Wade was reinstated, that his suspension was ended, but recently, as of September 13, the committee received yet another email from Mr. Wade, and this is what he said:

"I returned to work at Ornge in my capacity of rotor pilot on Tuesday, September 11 after many weeks of suspension. The investigation conducted by Ornge's third party investigator showed all questions into me being 'unsubstantiated.' I was exonerated. I spent most of the day Tuesday and Wednesday flying patients around northern Ontario.

"Today"—being September 13—"at 1 p.m., I received a phone call at work re-suspending me until further notice because they claim the 'reintegration' hasn't gone well and they feel I cannot exercise the privileges of my aviation document. The actions against me by Ornge continue. This time they insist on having a medical examiner of 'their choice' examine me. This is a way for Ornge to receive a finding of their liking so they can terminate me."

Mr. Speaker, this is completely outrageous. This is calling into question the ability of somebody to practise the profession they have been practising for a number of years. This is a serious, serious allegation, and to suggest that Bill 50 is going to solve all of these problems is outrageous. Remember, this is a new board. This is a new administration. This isn't Dr. Mazza; this isn't the people who were in power up until December of last year; this is a whole new crew, yet this practice continues. Any suggestion that section 7.7 in Bill 50 is going to make everything better—is completely not going to happen.

And lest anybody think that Mr. Wade is just a sole voice out in the wilderness, there have been many, many emails that have been sent in by his colleagues supporting him and indicating that they feel very strongly that it's because he gave negative evidence before Ornge that he was suspended and not for any other reason. Now it's going from not just a suspension but to termination.

I would just like to take a minute to indicate the extent of the support that there is out there in the aviation community for Mr. Wade and what he said and how people feel he is really being a hero under these circumstances for having the ability to stand up to what seems like a very concerted effort to keep people from stating the truth about what's been happening in our air ambulance service.

I should say, before I read any of these, I really want to stress how proud we are of the people that are flying both fixed-wing and helicopters for the air ambulance service, how this in no way is meant to denigrate the fine work that they're doing under very trying circumstances. All we want to do with our investigation into this—our request for a select committee and all of the questions that we're asking in public accounts—is really to get

things to the situation where they are able to do their jobs properly. That's all we want.

Here's what was said from some of the others:

"Just read in the Toronto Star about you being suspended following your testimony last week. Sounds like they are trying to spin it as something else but as far as I'm aware, having known and worked with you for over 10 years the reasons are baseless.

"Way too coincidental to come to any conclusion other than this is an attempt to silence those who question Ornge's competency. I'm sure the intent is to silence any critics. Hopefully that will not be the case.

"Hang in there. I trust this will be resolved quickly and Ornge's bullying tactics will inform the public of how they continue to run this once-proud service."

Here's another one:

"My opinion, to suspend someone because they speak their mind seems unjust. We all speak our mind at every base, and we don't get suspended! If someone did something dangerous or interfered with the task at hand in the cockpit of an aircraft—should be suspended, rightly so! But otherwise, there are steps to be followed before a suspension, were they followed? If no, I do not support this.

"It seems quite a coincidence to suspend Bruce Wade—"

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Thank you again.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have been listening very attentively to the deliberation by the member from Whitby—Oshawa, and rightly so. She has given a well-thought presentation on some of the issues surrounding the delivery of service at Ornge, and rightly so. I think she read from the excerpts the content of a particular staff member. But I have to say, Speaker, that we are here specifically for that particular reason. If everything was hunky-dory, we wouldn't be discussing Bill 50 here today.

I have to say, Speaker, that after some time—I'm sure that within the organization of Ornge there are plenty of good, responsible, down-to-earth people delivering good health care service to the people of Ontario. The fact is, Speaker, we are debating this bill here. The fact that we are debating this bill here today—

Interjection.

Mr. Mario Sergio: If the member would like to pay attention, Speaker—it is because the government has listened to the people outside and the people on the opposition side saying something is wrong and needs to be made right, and we are here. The government listened, the Premier, the minister. We have been listening to the report by the Auditor General.

I have to say, Speaker, maybe we'd like to see something better in the bill, and we'll look to the opposition for some input on the bill as well. I feel a bit taken aback when they make good comments and then they say, "We will not support the bill." Well, excuse me. Their job in here is to exactly assist the government in

whatever way possible to make the bill right, and I hope that this will be indeed the thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the address by my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa.

I'd like to assist this government right out the door. It's a damned disgrace. Bill 50 should have been called "Bill shifty," because the whole point of this legislation is to shift the blame away from the mess they've created at Ornge. They've been trying to do it for months. Six months ago the other day, March 21, they tabled this piece of legislation. "Oh, they're in a big hurry to get it passed"—we never saw it in the House for weeks and weeks. It comes down to this: Who can you trust? You think the people out here trust Dalton McGuinty these days? I don't think so.

We know that Chris Mazza says he met with the Premier on multiple occasions. We know that Alfred Apps and Chris Mazza had a conversation with him and he said, "The meeting with the Premier went really, really well. Everything we had hoped to accomplish, we accomplished." Interestingly enough, after those conversations, the taps of money open up and buckets and barrels of money flowed to Ornge—\$750 million to Ornge after these meetings that the Premier has with Chris Mazza, and Alfred Apps thinks they're just great meetings.

You know, folks, we tried to get a committee established. We tried to get the Premier to come before the public accounts committee. He has rebuffed every attempt to get him out there to testify. Folks, we know that Chris Mazza can't be trusted. We know that he's a liar. We also know that in the last two campaigns, Dalton McGuinty has had to admit that in the first two campaigns, he lied. So are we going to trust him or are we going to trust Chris Mazza—or neither one of them? Let's get to the bottom of this and get a select committee on Ornge.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I ask the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Do we get a vote on this?

I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

I'll now return to the member for Whitby–Oshawa, who has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did listen with interest to the comments made by the members from York West and from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

With respect to the member from York West's comment, our goal is of course to assist in situations where we agree with the legislation, we think it makes sense and we think it's going to be actually effective, but in the present situation, I have to agree with the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that this is a completely toothless piece of legislation that was really just designed to deflect the blame away from this government's massive lack of oversight and accountability.

We had years of this going on. We have millions and millions of dollars that have gone unaccounted for. We know that there's a criminal investigation that's ongoing and we await the results of the OPP investigation, but we still have many, many questions that remain unanswered, conflicting testimony that's been given in committee by the various witnesses, including evidence that was given by Chris Mazza that is directly at odds with the evidence that was given by the Minister of Health. We have asked for the Premier to come before the committee on several occasions to let us know his knowledge of the situation. He consistently refuses to come. We've asked for a staff member who was very senior in his department and who was very involved with the whole Ornge file; she has also refused to come.

We were being stonewalled in committee on this. We really want to have a select committee to be able to examine these things in their entirety, but at the end of the day, we really can't vote in favour of Bill 50 because we really don't even know what the problem is. How can you try to fix a problem when you don't even know the extent of it yet?

That's why we need to carry on. We need to carry on in public accounts. We need to get those committees constituted and get going to get to the bottom of this to make sure we can actually fix it.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1754.

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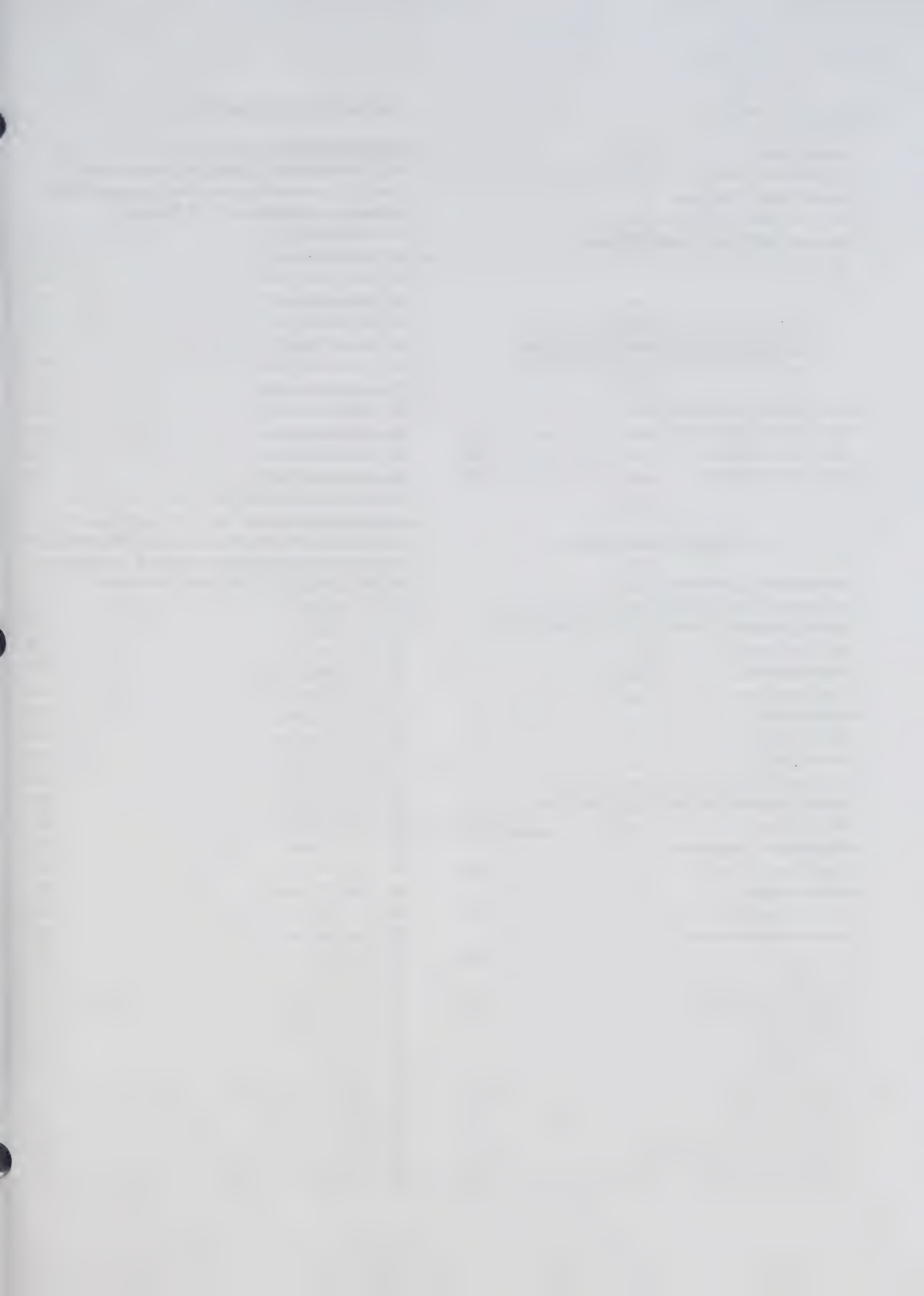
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of Ontario**

First Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

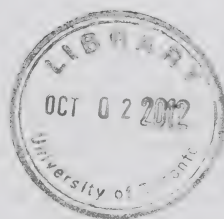
Première session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 25 September 2012

Mardi 25 septembre 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 September 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 septembre 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On September 13, 2012—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm waiting. We'll try that again.

On September 13, 2012, in response to a point of privilege raised by the member from Cambridge, Mr. Leone, I offered a period of time to allow the House leaders to devise a means by which the concerns of all parties could be met. I also indicated that I would return to the House to make a statement on the matter.

Let me now advise the House of the position we currently find ourselves in. I first want to make note for the House that the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority yesterday tabled a large number of documents related to the Oakville and Mississauga power plants.

Letters of transmittal from both the minister and the OPA indicate that what was tabled comprises all documents responsive to the May 16 request of the Standing Committee on Estimates. It would appear that the House is now in receipt of the requisite documents; however, this is ultimately a determination for the Standing Committee on Estimates to make.

It seems equally apparent to me, not having received any communication to the contrary signed by all three House leaders, that there are still some remaining concerns related to the initial refusal to produce the documents and the length of time it has taken to do so. This takes us to the finding of a prima facie breach of privilege on September 13, and the response of the House to that finding.

At this point, I want to take a moment to clarify for the House exactly what a prima facie finding of a breach of privilege means, and just as importantly what it does not mean, just as Speaker Peters did in relation to a similar situation on May 4, 2010:

“Joseph Maingot, in *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, states (at page 221):

“A prima facie case of privilege in the parliamentary sense is one where the evidence on its face as outlined by the member is sufficiently strong for the House to be asked to debate the matter and to send it to a committee to investigate whether the privileges of the House have

been breached or contempt has occurred and report to the House....

“While the Speaker may find that a prima facie case of privilege exists and give the matter precedence in debate, it is the House alone that decides whether a breach of privilege or a contempt has occurred, for only the House has the power to commit or punish for contempt.”

“In short, a prima facie finding by the Speaker does not mean that the Speaker has found anyone guilty of such an allegation. Rather, prima facie means the Speaker has determined that on the face of it, the information presented points toward the likelihood that a breach of privilege has occurred, and that it is in the interests of the House to give priority consideration to such a serious matter, and for a parliamentary committee to inquire into it.”

In the case at hand, while it may be that the House would determine that the documents having been tabled resolves the matter and that is the end of it, it may also be that the House would determine otherwise; that is, that the matter of prima facie finding still warrants a response. Either way, it is the House, not the Speaker, that is in the position to make that determination.

That being the case, I understand that the member from Cambridge has been advised on what an appropriate motion would be in response to a prima facie finding of breach of privilege such as this. I will now turn to the member from Cambridge to determine if he does wish to proceed with that motion.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I do plan on—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Indicate if you wish.

Mr. Rob Leone: Yes, I do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before allowing the member for Cambridge to put a motion, I also want to clarify for the House how the subsequent debate will play out in the House in a practical sense.

The motion that the member for Cambridge will move is debatable and amendable. It will have precedence over and will displace consideration of all regular business until it is disposed of. This includes question period, deferred votes, routine proceedings and private members' public business. I will note that on previous occasions in 2003 and 1999, with a privilege motion being debated, the House still considered private members' public business. This is attributable to the fact that the physical structure of the meeting day in those years was different than it is today. It is not now possible, as it was on the previous times, to separate out a discrete time for private members' business.

Debate on the motion will comprise of the normal rotation, with each member being entitled to speak for up to 20 minutes on the motion and again on any amendment. There will not be a period for questions and comments following speeches. While the vote on any such amendment is not deferrable, the vote on the main motion will be.

I now recognize the member from Cambridge to put his motion.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House directs the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to table immediately with the Clerk of the House all remaining documents ordered by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012; and

That the matter of the Speaker's finding of a *prima facie* case of privilege, with respect to the production of documents by the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to the Standing Committee on Estimates, be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which is hereby reconstituted as it existed on September 9, 2012; and

That the committee shall be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair and shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012.

0910

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge, Mr. Leone, moves that this House directs the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to table immediately with the Clerk of the House all remaining documents ordered by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012; and

That the matter of the Speaker's finding of a *prima facie* case of privilege, with respect to the production of documents by the Minister of Energy of the Ontario Power Authority to the Standing Committee of Estimates, be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which is hereby reconstituted as it existed on September 9, 2012; and

That the committee shall be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair, and shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012.

Mr. Leone, the member from Cambridge, you have 20 minutes.

Interjection.

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm not trying to be difficult, but we have heard this motion for the first time in the last 30 seconds. It's the usual practice of the House that members have copies of the motion through the order paper and that we have an opportunity to see it in advance. Under these circumstances, I look for your guidance. There's also the issue, as is the usual practice, of French translation etc. I look for your guidance as to how this is dealt with in this situation so that members have access to the motion that you are asking us to debate.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

I thank the government House leader for his point of order. For clarity purposes, under these circumstances and under this condition, these requests are not required. I ask the Clerk to make as quickly as possible the said documents to ensure that you have copies available for you.

The member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Prior to coming to this place, I was a university professor. I studied political science, and one of my favourite subjects of interest was our parliamentary system and our parliamentary democracy.

One of the fundamental foundational principles of our government is the principle of responsible government. In responsible government—as I used to tell my students, Mr. Speaker—the crown, the government, the cabinet, is responsible in three occasions. On the first instance, it's responsible to the crown.

It's also responsible to the people, and we have democratic elections, at which time the people get to pass judgment on this government. Certainly, we always make the case, as the opposition, that the government is not doing its appropriate work, and in particular with relation to this matter, that we see instances from time to time where issues like this come up that seemingly brew elements of cynicism in our government. We have to protect that. That's our role here: to ensure that people have respect for the work that we do in this place and that we eliminate the cynicism to the greatest extent possible. So we're going to be making the case that the people, Mr. Speaker, that we have a position that's quite different from the government's when that time comes.

But most importantly, and why we're here, is that the government is responsible, the cabinet is responsible to this Legislature. We can never lose sight of that. It's our responsibility as legislators, particularly our responsibility as members of the opposition, to hold the government to account. In order for us to do that job, in order for us to be able to do the work that we are entrusted to do by our constituents, we have to be able to get the information with respect to what government is doing and not doing as best as possible.

The reason why we're here, the reason why I'm here standing in this place today moving the motion that I just moved, is related to the fact that we don't have the information that we have requested. We requested this on May 16 in the estimates committee—May 16. It's now the end of September, and we're just getting a few more trinkets of documents flowing through, not nearly the amount I think that we were hoping for, and certainly we have questions. But it's the fact that we have to have the information available to us to hold the government to account.

There remain lingering questions as to what the costs of the relocation of the two power plants are, both the Mississauga power plant and the Oakville power plant, the costs associated with doing that. We have questions related to the fact of why the government actually sited those plants where they did to begin with. I know, as we

all start to comb through the thousands of pages of documents that were provided, questions are not being answered. In fact we almost have more questions today than we did before yesterday. Simply for that reason, Mr. Speaker, we need a committee of this Legislature to examine, to explore, to investigate exactly what is happening in that ministry.

One of the things that has been debated at length in the estimates committee and in this House is the question of who is entrusted to represent the public interest. The public interest is something that we often hear as an excuse: "We can't give you documents because it's against the public interest for people to know exactly what their government is doing." I reject that premise, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that the public interest can never be determined by one person or one government. We're entrusted by our constituents to uphold the public interest. Each and every one of us in this chamber is entrusted by our constituents to uphold the public interest. That is what we do here. That's our role. The public interest is not for a minister to say or determine and use that as a shield to prevent the information from flowing to its committees or to this House or to the people. It can't be used as a shield. We all have a role to play in protecting that public interest, and I believe that the public has a right to know exactly the reasons why this power plant was put there in the first place and then cancelled.

Each and every step along the way, we've seen the government's unwillingness to listen, unwillingness to listen to members of this House when they're asking very simple and basic questions. It shouldn't be this hard to get information. It shouldn't be this hard to actually say, "Well, how much does something cost?" We have to wait, on the verge of finding a minister in contempt of this House, to get any information, and only then do we get some trinkets. It takes us going to these lengths to find the information, to hold this government accountable, to do the job that the people of Ontario have entrusted us to do, and Mr. Speaker, that behaviour cannot be rewarded.

In my view, we are still proceeding with the motion of contempt, or at least the motion to get a committee to study contempt, for two reasons. First of all, and I've mentioned this already, it's taken quite a long time to get to this stage. We're here four months later, still trying to get to the bottom of what's happened. And, Mr. Speaker, we got some information. I've perused many thousands of pages, and certainly other members and their staff have looked at it, too. We've looked at it. I'm not sure what the government was afraid of. If whatever is in those documents was something subject to be withheld, we certainly don't know what that is.

We get asked, "Is there a smoking gun in the documents?" I've reviewed thousands of pages. I haven't seen a smoking document. I wonder why they take so long to release something that simply isn't there. The answer to that question might be what's not in those documents. What are they hiding? If it took so long to table those documents that there's no real smoking gun in—why?

What are you trying to hide? This is why we need a committee of this House to investigate in their entirety those documents and to see if there are other documents that might be present. There are some inquiries that we need to make. There are some questions that we have to ask. I think, Mr. Speaker, that putting this question to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs is the appropriate place to have these discussions, because we're talking at the end of the day about taxpayer dollars; we're talking today about the squandering of hundreds of millions of dollars—not to build roads and hospitals and bridges, not to provide MRIs or cancer treatment, but to move power plants that simply don't exist. I think the people of Ontario have some serious questions to ask with respect to these motivations and the political motivations that may underlie the decisions that they made there.

0920

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we have some serious questions about whether the government has in fact tabled all the documents. Certainly, it's up to this House to decide, and I recognize the points that you made prior to allowing me to stand here. But it is the House that has to determine this, and there are some questions that we have with respect to the documents. Why, for example, do we have not one document that was authored by the former Minister of Energy—not one—who is currently the Minister of Economic Development? Either he never thought it necessary to write "power plants" in any of his correspondence—it's a pretty major part of his portfolio, so I don't think that is the reason—or the government might be withholding all correspondence that was authored by the former Minister of Energy. So we have to ask those questions, and asking those questions in committee is the precise point in time to do that.

We see in the correspondence we have received to date that there are, in fact, gaps in time, where there's been a series of things that have been talked about with reference to, let's say, the Oakville power plant, and then nothing else is said for weeks. We have to ask questions, Mr. Speaker. Exactly what happened in those transpiring weeks between the blackout period, as I like to call it, between the end of correspondence and the cancellation of the Oakville plant—two or three weeks, and no documents with respect to that. So we have serious questions with relation to that.

Mr. Speaker, I do have some serious concerns about whether we've seen all the documents, unredacted, as requested by this House. Among the 36,000 pages that we've seen reported and we've reviewed, thousands of pages are blank, some of which have clear whiteouts and redactions. So we have some questions about exactly what is in those documents.

We're moving forward, Mr. Speaker. I think it's right to suggest—because people ask the question, "Why are you going forward when you received the documents?" We feel that there is still more to be said. All the documents aren't before us, and that's why we're proceeding with this motion.

Mr. Speaker, I have some ice in my mouth. I have a sore throat, too, so it's making it feel a little better.

We are in very serious times. One of the things that I think bears some questions is the precise cost of the power plants. Yesterday, those members listened to the energy minister during question period saying that the cost for the relocation of the plant is only \$40 million. Now, Mr. Speaker, that number didn't include the cost of \$210 million with respect to the turbines that the OPA has to purchase. They'll be sending a cheque next week, I'm sure. It doesn't include the cost of the new transmission lines that have to be put into place.

Simply put, in the documents we saw some very interesting information with respect to the siting of the Oakville plant. The OPA believed that that was the only place it could be if we wanted to avoid at least \$200 million in extra expenditures on building transmission lines to the western part of the GTA. Mr. Speaker, those are figures that have to be included in the total cost of the power plant. So we want to ask some serious, hard questions. Exactly what is set before us? What are the numbers? What are the facts? What are the things that we have to determine during the course of our work in committee?

So again, Mr. Speaker, this is about holding the government to account. This isn't about a political motivation, other than doing our job as members of the opposition. That is the reality of it here. What we want to fight against—what we're certainly trying to fight against is the political motivations of the government, who have clearly embarked upon the biggest and the most expensive seat-saver program in the province's history, in the country's history. So there's enough to go around to apply the blame in terms of the political opportunism that we see before us and where the political interests have superseded the government's decision to in fact do this against the public interest.

We have lots of questions, Mr. Speaker, to discuss. We're very eager to get this to committee where we can debate these items, some of which I've just outlined today, and there's a lot more. There's a lot more to be said about this, and we certainly want to pursue this investigation further because we believe that a case for contempt is probably stronger today, after those documents have been tabled, than it was before we had those documents.

Mr. Speaker, we want to uncover the truth. That's our goal, that's our mission, and that's what people entrusted us to do.

Mr. Jim McDonell: That's our job.

Mr. Rob Leone: As my seatmate has said, that's our job, and he's absolutely right. We have a responsibility here to make sure that the public interest is upheld and that people's tax dollars aren't being wasted on not building power plants and instead put to front-line health care and education, which I think members of this House think is a worthwhile and wise investment, and certainly we do on an ongoing basis, Mr. Speaker.

This is where we are, at this historic juncture. I think this hasn't happened in this Legislature for 104 years. We are in the midst of making history. This is a very power-

ful task that we are charged with, one that we cannot take lightly.

Much like my favourite parliamentary theorists like Blackstone, Dicey and Burke, who have, for years—centuries, in fact—written about the value of having responsible government and a robust parliamentary system, we are entrusted, 107 members of this Legislature are entrusted, to do that work that has for centuries been done in the Commonwealth. This is a very important task, a serious task, a task that we have taken great lengths to consider. Whether it was in the course of debate at estimates or debating it here in this House through what I thought was one of my most memorable days when we debated your ruling on this point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, I think that our forefathers and -mothers would be proud of the work that we're doing on this file each and every day.

I just received a note here, Mr. Speaker. I think there's some question about the date which we've listed here, so I would like to move an amendment that the words "November 19, 2012" be deleted and the following added: "November 23, 2012."

0930

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge has moved his amendment to read "November 23"—to confirm with the member from Cambridge?

Mr. Rob Leone: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): November 23.

Further debate.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves in an unusual situation. This government made decisions about power planning and power investment in Ontario that will cost Ontarians hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: On a point of order—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Could you clarify whether we're not debating the amendment now, an amendment having been placed?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To be precise, we are debating the amendment, but because of the content of what that amendment is, it's the overall tenor of the bill, because the numbers were changed from the 19th to the 23rd.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: May I continue, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will now recognize the member from Toronto—Danforth to continue.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. It is generally acknowledged in the media and in this Legislature that, contrary to the advice of the Ontario Power Authority, this government made decisions solely to save its own political fortunes. Speaker, it is our duty here to understand all the factors that led into that decision-making, who made those decisions and fully what the cost of those decisions was.

It is at least apparent at this point that the decision to build a plant in Mississauga and then cancel it once it was under construction cost the people of Ontario \$190 million. It may have cost more. It's our intention to

review the documents that were provided to us and actually determine exactly what those costs were. On the face of it at this point, the decision to go ahead with a plant in Oakville—which this party said was unnecessary, that this party said would have been far more economically dealt with through investment in efficiency and conservation. It is apparent at this point that the decision to proceed with that plant and then to cancel it in order to save a seat cost us at least another \$40 million. But, Speaker, when one reviews the file, one finds that there's at least another \$200 million added on top of that to deal with the cost of putting transmission lines in the southwest of the greater Toronto area, to make up for the fact that that plant had been moved elsewhere, to make up for the fact that power needs in that area will not have been met.

Speaker, in addition to that, there's \$210 million for steam turbine generators bought by the government of Ontario that will be provided to the plant which will be moved to Napanee. I would say that we're talking about a \$450-million expenditure there. That is of consequence. It is our responsibility as legislators to understand, again, what the processes of decision-making were that led us to commit to a plant that this party felt was not necessary, and then led to a political decision to incur extra cost for the people of Ontario by making a political decision rather than a power decision.

Speaker, Mr. Leone has spoken about the documents that have been provided to us—roughly 30,000 pages. When one reads the documents, one has to say that, on the face of it, they are not complete. If you look through the documents—and perhaps others will find documents that I have not found, that our staff to this point have not found—interestingly, there is not a single email from the previous Minister of Energy, Brad Duguid, or the current Minister of Energy, Chris Bentley. One has to ask: How did they communicate their wishes with staff? Did they operate on a verbal-orders-only basis? Did they send handwritten notes that were then filed away or recycled? How is it that they made their wishes and interests known to their staff?

Based on the documents that were presented to us, the only decision-making happened from the assistant deputy minister level down. Frankly, Madam Speaker, an awful lot of those documents were between communications staff to other communications staff: "How do we manage this mess in front of us?" That leads me to believe, as it led Mr. Leone to believe, that the documentation presented to us was, at a minimum, incomplete.

Beyond that, the letter of engagement with the law firm hired to deal with TransCanada pipeline and the Oakville matter goes page 1, page 2 and then page 5. I'm going to assume that Word was operative when those documents were generated and would automatically have numbered them, and thus I conclude some pages were missing. Of those pages that were present, there were references to Greenfield—the other plant that's in contention; the Mississauga gas plant—that had large areas of white all around them. Significant sections of the letters were taken out. I have to ask myself: Is the gov-

ernment being forthcoming when it sends us documentation that is heavily obscured, that has significant sections or potentially significant sections taken out? That does not seem to comply with the resolution of the estimates committee; doesn't comply with the direction of this House to produce the documents.

Speaker, this Legislature, and we individual legislators who sit in it, are held accountable by the people who send us here to act on their behalf. They ask us to look out for their interests, to fully understand what's going on; if we're in government, to act in the interests of the people of Ontario; if we're in opposition, to ensure that the government operates the way people expect it to operate. We are the people expected to hold the government to account, to make sure that the truth of matters is brought out and that the interests of the whole of the province are taken into consideration when decisions are made. We can't do our job, and the public cannot do its job, if documents are obscured and withheld.

It is unfortunate, Madam Speaker, but others who sat on the estimates committee with me this spring and this summer know very well that in attempting to ask questions of this minister about straightforward technical matters, we could not get answers. This minister consistently would play all over the field to avoid giving a direct answer for simple questions like: "How do you pay for insurance on your different power plants? What do you pay for insurance?" A question I asked, "How much do your energy efficiency programs cost?", could not be answered and has not yet been answered.

Speaker, if we ask leading and rhetorical questions that really don't have an answer, well, then, I say that the minister has the right to skate around and reply with rhetoric. But if we ask straightforward questions about the operation of the ministry that the minister has responsibility for and we cannot get answers and we are delayed and we are stonewalled, then the credibility of that minister with regard to giving information to the public comes into question. If we had had a very different experience in estimates, where in fact the minister was straightforward with us, I think he might actually get a greater degree of trust in this House. But he did not engender trust. What he engendered was a sense that, wherever significant matters of concern to the people of Ontario were in play, we could not rely on him to speak and give us the information. For us, then, to go through these 30,000 pages of documents without having a clear indication that this in fact is the full body of documents in question; for us to be in a situation where we speak to our constituents, to the public, and have to say that we have been able to judge this matter clearly and adequately—we can't say that today. I wish we could say that today. I wish we could say, "We have all the documents. We will go through a process of analysis, of reading, of comparison, and we will, on behalf of the public, be able to explain what happened here." That can't happen today.

0940

There are some tantalizing pieces in the documentation: at one point, an exchange of emails between senior

people in the Ontario Power Authority talking about the fact that the government is negotiating with the owners, the proponents of these power plants, without talking to them, even though they hold the contracts. If I was on the board of directors of the Ontario Power Authority, I would realize that I was really simply a front, a facade for decision-making taken at a completely different level. The documents may not have given all the information we want, but they have made it clear that the Ontario Power Authority is far less than an arm's-length body when it comes to power decision-making. It is simply a front for the Minister of Energy.

The other interesting document is a reference to a Minister of Energy finding out that a decision had been made about a power plant out of the Premier's office without the minister having been told in advance. One would ask, what is the purpose of the minister? What is the purpose of the minister's staff? Who actually is advising on energy and who is actually executing the decisions? These are substantial questions. When the Minister of Energy stands up in the House, it's our expectation that in fact that is the person who has the authority, that is the person who is weighing the factors that bear on the province's future and on its supply of electricity, and that is the person that we hold to account. Legally, that's what's before us. But the documentation, even in the limited form that has been presented to us, indicates that the minister is a relatively small part of this whole process.

Speaker, I'd like to move a motion—sorry; an amendment, a sub-amendment, to the amendment of Mr. Leone. I move that the words “November 23, 2012” be removed and the following be added: “November 26, 2012.” Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Tabuns has moved that the words “November 23, 2012” be removed and the following be added: “November 26, 2012.”

Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to go back and speak to the main motion, and I will have an opportunity to expand on the amendment at a later point.

In reading the documentation—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. You need to speak to the amendment you just moved.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You can talk about anything.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, John.

Madam Speaker, it is very clear that it is going to take us a fair amount of time to get through all of this. It is going to take us a fair amount of time.

When I was looking last night at the internal emails to the Ontario Power Authority around the time that the plant was cancelled—to their surprise—in Oakville, it was very clear that when they were asked, they advised that, in fact, the plant was surplus to the needs of Ontario, that it wasn't needed to back up renewable power, that it was not needed to shut down coal, that it was not needed

to meet supply issues in Ontario as a whole, and that in fact the power needs, the reliability needs, for the south-west GTA—Mississauga, parts of Etobicoke, Oakville—could be met by an investment in transmission lines. A year earlier, when this plant was commissioned, that analysis had not been done.

It was clear to us at the time when this plant was proposed that we already had a substantial power surplus in Ontario and that further investment in these plants was going to be extremely costly and, frankly, that this plant was going to be unneeded. Within 12 months, the OPA had come to a similar conclusion, even though a contract had been inked, the value of which was \$1.2 billion, the payout on which will be over \$3 billion over the next 20 years.

An initial error, a realization of the political impact of that error, a lost seat, and then incremental costs to deal with the political error—that is no way to run an electricity system, it is no way to run a province, and frankly, it is no way for us and the public to actually come to grips with how Ontario is governed.

Speaker, this government has had the opportunity to go through its files and present the documents requested by the Legislature. For reasons that are not clear to me, it has not provided the documents requested. I believe that the full order from the committee, the full decision of the committee, needs to be met by the government, that we need to see what the Minister of Energy actually directed his staff to do. We need to see if staff from the Premier's office were directing OPA or Ministry of Energy staff, aside from anything the minister was doing. We need to see the directions from the decision-makers—not the people given the job to carry out a decision, as interesting as their notes may be—saying, “This is a problem. This is how it will be solved. Act accordingly.” On the face of it, we have not been given those documents yet. For us to make our assessment, for the people of Ontario to know what really happened, we need those documents.

Mr. Leone has made a motion that aids the people of Ontario in understanding. He has made a motion that holds the government to account. We have a government at the moment that is apparently trying to dodge that accountability. It needs to, in fact, follow the original direction. Provide the documents.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

0950

Hon. John Milloy: Madam Speaker, I stand today with mixed emotions. I stand today with a sense of pride, because it gives me an opportunity to defend and speak about a colleague and a friend, the Minister of Energy, the Honourable Chris Bentley, someone who was elected in 2003, as I was, and has served this Legislature with distinction as Minister of Labour and as Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I had the opportunity to serve as his parliamentary assistant and saw him as a great parliamentarian. He went on to be Attorney General and served with great distinction here in the province of Ontario. Finally, he now serves as Minister of Energy,

someone who, again, has served with distinction and handled many, many complicated—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I can't hear the speaker. I'd ask you to respect the Chair.

Hon. John Milloy: He has distinguished himself as an outstanding minister and an outstanding parliamentarian.

As House leader, one would expect that in a situation like this I would be standing today with all sorts of parliamentary procedure books and quoting all sorts of arcane rulings. There's nothing wrong with that, but in this case it's actually very, very straightforward. I think it's very easy to understand what the position of the government is and what the position I would urge to be of this Legislature.

Let's look at the facts: Right now, we have a situation where a committee of this Legislature has asked for certain documents to be produced. We have produced those documents.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: I hear the heckling across the way when I say that, with a bit of sadness. I'm old enough to remember the party of Bill Davis. I'm old enough to remember the great Progressive Conservative Party of this province and their respect for Parliament and their respect for our institutions.

At lunchtime yesterday, the Minister of Energy tabled, with the Clerk of the House and with the clerk of the estimates committee, all the documents that were requested by the committee. I have in my hands copies of the attestations signed by Colin Andersen, the chief executive officer of the Ontario Power Authority, and Chris Bentley, the Minister of Energy, pointing out that all documents that were requested were put there.

What's going on here today is nothing short of disgusting. It is not the party of Bill Davis or John Robarts. It's not the party of the Progressive Conservatives, who understand that in Parliament, a minister's word is the truth. The minister has signed that all documents that have been asked for have been provided, and, Madam Speaker, there is a parliamentary tradition that respects that. To sit here in some sort of kangaroo court where the opposition is saying that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. John Milloy: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

The principle that the opposition is putting forward, a principle which saddens me and even disgusts me, that somehow someone is guilty until proven innocent, goes against parliamentary traditions for hundreds and hundreds of years. The minister has tabled the documents that were requested.

What has been the origin of the debate that we're having right now is a motion that was put forward by the committee that I would like to read into the record. It says: "Furthermore, that the committee recommends to the House that the Minister of Energy be compelled to provide the Standing Committee on Estimates, without delay, the documents and information it ordered pursuant

to standing order 110(b) and, if the minister refuses, that he be held in contempt of Parliament for breach of privilege."

The minister has not refused. The minister has provided those documents. The case is closed. The matter is done.

As I said, I'm not going to stand here with arcane books, with procedures and rulings. I'm going to paint the picture as it is. A request came from the estimates committee for these documents. The documents have been produced. The request from the committee said that if they were refused, we'd go forward with contempt.

Madam Speaker, let me give you the context of what has happened. I'm giving you the very, very simple argument that's the heart of it, but I'm going to spend the few minutes that I have to talk about the context of this.

There were two planned gas plants, one in Mississauga and one in Oakville, and as members of this House know, they were cancelled. Why were they cancelled? They were cancelled for a variety of reasons, but I think the important point—anyone who is looking at this case would know that there was unanimity on all sides of the House.

I had a chance yesterday in question period, as I said, to walk down memory lane, so let's do it again. Let's look at the member from Halton and what he told Hansard on June 1, 2010: "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them."

MPP Toby Barrett said, in a letter to the Minister of Energy: "The potential for future alternate generation at Nanticoke to replace that slated for the proposed and disputed Clarkson plant should receive ample consideration."

The member from Hamilton Centre—it's not just the Conservatives, Madam Speaker: "New Democrats actually have thought for a long time that that plant should never have been built and we've said so."

The member from Toronto—Danforth, who we just heard: "I don't agree with the Oakville power plant. I don't think it is necessary."

Interjection: Unanimity.

Hon. John Milloy: Unanimity, Madam Speaker. So what do we do? We cancel the plants.

That's not the point of the debate today. The point of the debate today is the fact that there were discussions in front of the estimates committee about these cancellations—appropriate discussions—and the Minister of Energy was asked to provide certain documents. The Minister of Energy did not refuse outright. He brought forward the very simple proposition that many of these documents in fact reflected upon negotiations that were going on right there, related to the Oakville power plant and its potential location somewhere else, and that to release those documents of a commercially sensitive nature could cost the taxpayers significant amounts of money and jeopardize those negotiations. I think people can understand that. As I've said in other contexts, anyone who has ever purchased a car or purchased a house and

has been involved in negotiations knows that if they had access to what the other side was thinking and doing, to documents that were prepared in confidence, it could jeopardize those negotiations.

In fact, no less of an expert than an officer of this Legislature, the Auditor General of Ontario, said on September 5 in public accounts: "My sense on the Oakville one"—meaning the Oakville power plant—"is that it could very well be that some of this information could be subject to client-solicitor privilege, or even if we were to get it"—get the documents—"in my opinion, it could be damaging to the province's negotiating position."

There was debate at committee. There was discussion at committee. The Chair himself, Mr. Prue, agreed. He in fact acknowledged the fact that there were competing interests here. I quote Hansard on May 16 of the Standing Committee on Estimates:

"The minister has the right to decline either giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during his answering of the questions...."

"I would advise that I'm going to allow the motion to proceed, but I would also advise—and I think the minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and I would expect him to do so. That would be my ruling."

The Minister of Energy provided documents to the Standing Committee on Estimates—not all the documents—and the matter was referred to the Legislature. The Speaker, about 10 days ago, stood in this place and made a ruling. He made a ruling that acknowledged the fact that we have competing interests here. He made a ruling that knew that there were commercial confidences at play, that there was solicitor-client privilege at play. He realized that although the committee has an absolute right to those documents, there needed to be an opportunity for House leaders to sit down to discuss the matter and move forward.

I think it's worth quoting from the Speaker's ruling. What he did is he quoted two passages from Speaker Milliken's April 27, 2010, detainee ruling. It says:

"It seems to me, that the issue before us is this: Is it possible to put into place a mechanism by which these documents could be made available to the House without compromising the security and confidentiality of the information they contain? In other words, is it possible for the two sides, working together in the best interest of the Canadians they serve, to devise a means where both their concerns are met? Surely that is not too much to hope for."

I go on to quote the Speaker's ruling now directly:

"I, too, have immense faith in the abilities of the honourable members of this House. I know that a solution can be found to this impasse. All sides need to exercise sobriety in this. Political fortunes should not be the motive for eroding the supremacy of Parliament or ignoring the best interests of citizens in this province. Assiduous attention should be paid to dealing with matters such as this responsibly."

The matter was sent to the House leaders. Again, why, Madam Speaker? Because the Speaker recognized that there were competing interests here. We had the power of the committee to ask for those documents on one hand, and on the other hand, we had the public interest—the fact that we could potentially jeopardize millions of taxpayers' dollars if these documents were released in a manner which jeopardized the negotiations.

1000

Madam Speaker, the House leaders had the opportunity to meet four times. I, of course, was a participant in all those meetings. Just for the record, I want to talk about those discussions and what was put on the table.

What we did is, we went to the House leaders, and we put forward what we called two paths. The reason why we call them paths is, first of all, to comply with the Speaker's ruling, a path to meet the requirements of the estimates committee, which I remind you again, was to make all the documents public. In putting those paths forward, Madam Speaker, I made two provisions. First of all, I said if the opposition wanted to come forward with their own paths, we were all ears; we were very happy to work with them and to co-operate with them. The second proviso that I put down is that the paths we put forward were merely frameworks and that we were very open to any discussion, to any amendments, to any ideas they had to alter them, to alter their nature, to change them slightly, to send it off in a slightly different direction.

I think it's important that we look at what those two paths are. The first is that we said the minute that the Oakville plant negotiations were completed, all documents would be released. We felt that those negotiations were coming to an end, and in fact, they came to an end Sunday, Madam Speaker, or early Monday morning—late Sunday night, early Monday morning, in fact. But as we sat down with the opposition, thinking that they were going to come to fruition in the next couple of weeks, we said, "Let's just suspend things for a period of time." I said, "Six weeks maximum, anything longer than six weeks, the documents will automatically be out there, but we feel, in that interim, the deal will be done. The documents will be released. The best interests of the taxpayers will be protected." The opposition said, "Forget it." They didn't care about the best interests of taxpayers. They didn't care about finding a balance between the two interests, Madam Speaker. What they said is, "Release the documents."

Then there's the second path, Madam Speaker. The second path we put forward is one that has been used in a variety of circumstances, and any student of Parliament or parliamentary procedure would be familiar with it. That is to put together a small committee, a small group of a representative from each party, who could potentially be advised and assisted by someone like the Auditor General, by retired judges, by legal minds or procedural minds to vet the documents, to go through the documents. If they found that there were sensitive documents, that there were parts of a document that could jeopardize the negotiations that were going on, they

would find a way to make sure that the estimates committee had access to them, but at the same time protect the interests of the taxpayers of Ontario.

They were the two paths that we put forward to the opposition. We invited them to bring their own paths forward, Madam Speaker, and we invited them to come up with any amendments, with any changes that they wanted to make to these paths. If six weeks wouldn't work, could it be a lesser amount? If they didn't want a panel with the Auditor General, were there other experts they could have? We were open to discussing how this subcommittee would work.

Madam Speaker, we sat down on Friday afternoon to discuss it, and I have to tell you that the meeting lasted about six and a half minutes. We were told by the opposition, unanimously, "You have no choice: Release the documents." I go back to the original, the original motion, which said, "Release the documents." Madam Speaker, it was in their power to ask us that, and I said, "Yes, we will release the documents," so yesterday at noon, every single document that had been requested was released.

Interjection: No, it wasn't.

Hon. John Milloy: To stand up here and say it's not, Madam Speaker, is to disrespect hundreds of years of parliamentary privilege. I have here two official documents that have been tabled with the Legislature. Those documents are signed, first, by the head of the Ontario Power Authority, and secondly, by the Minister of Energy, stating that every document requested has gone forward. Madam Speaker, I come from a tradition that believes that when a member of the Legislature says something in the Legislature, that is the truth. If they are going to disrespect the traditions of this House, then I ask them to stand up and furnish proof or evidence, or if not, to shut up, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Will you withdraw that?

Hon. John Milloy: I withdraw.

Madam Speaker, this is very serious. A member's word is truth in this Legislature. That is something that goes back generation after generation.

As I say, I'm disgusted to see the party of Bill Davis, a party which was known for its mastery of this place, of this Legislature, standing up for what is nothing more than cheap political tactics and attacking the good name of the Minister of Energy, who has provided every single document as requested by this committee.

The fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, there are competing interests at work. People understand that. As I say, it may be a simple analogy, but it's the same principle: If any of us went out to purchase a home or purchase a car—you know what?—we'd probably love to see all the internal correspondence and all the emails back and forth to family members or to others or to brokers or to lawyers about it, to understand the other side's position. That undermines negotiation. That is all that the Minister of Energy did. He raised flag after flag after flag about the potential danger of this, and the opposition said, "We don't care. We want the documents."

Madam Speaker, today is not about the fact that we raised these flags. It's about the fact that we complied with the request of the opposition.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: And they have the documents.

Hon. John Milloy: They have the documents. There is an attestation that they have the documents. We have met every single requirement that has been put forward by the Standing Committee on Estimates. As far as we are concerned and as far as I'm concerned, Madam Speaker, this matter is over.

I have to say again that I'm saddened by what we're seeing from the opposition, because I think what we're seeing is a whole trail, a whole symptom of something that seems very wrong with the way in which they are approaching the Legislature. We only have to go back to the spring, where we spent hour after hour after hour listening to bells ringing instead of debating some important issues of the day. We only have to go back to a party whose leader and others stood up and said they were going to vote against the budget before the budget was even brought forward.

Madam Speaker, this is not about me. This is not about the Liberal Party versus the Progressive Conservative Party. What this is about is the traditions of this Legislature. It's about the fact that we recognize that each of us are honourable members who are doing our best; that each of us, when we stand in this place, when we appear in front of committee, when we table correspondence in this House, that it reflects the truth. It's about the fact that we have met all the requests by the Standing Committee on Estimates, we have met the ruling of the Speaker, and it's time to put this matter against us.

Madam Speaker, we are going to be voting against this motion. We are going to vote against it because it is irrelevant, because the fact of the matter is that there was a breach in this House in the sense that the committee of estimates asked for these documents, but that breach has been repaired.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to end where I began, by talking about my colleague the Minister of Energy: the hard work that he has done in a number of portfolios, the outstanding service that he has done to this Legislature. And you know what, Madam Speaker? He joins members on all sides of this House, because when I look at all sides of this House, I do see outstanding members who have served, and I'm not afraid to say that because I have not become so overtaken by the partisan, vicious, vindictive spirit that we're seeing in the opposition.

The fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, this is a very simple situation. Documents were requested, flags were raised, a debate and discussion ensued, but those documents in their entirety have been provided to this Legislature. Madam Speaker, it's time to put this matter before us. It's time to acknowledge and support the traditions of hundreds and hundreds of years of parliamentary traditions that have been built on this House. It's time to honour the spirit of leaders like Bill Davis and John Robarts, and it's time to move on.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Where to begin? Speaker, I spent last evening having a look at one of the packets of documents. In fact, many of the 36,000 documents that were provided, Speaker—I am here to tell you—are blank pages.

Let me give you a few examples from what we call “Mississauga file 23 of 33.” Now, there is some very interesting reading here. Despite what the House leader opposite—despite his insistence that we have all of the documents, let me give you a couple of examples, Speaker. I might take 15 or so minutes to do this.

The email here, dated August 22, 2011:

“Re the Greenfield South project issue note:

“On the rest of the topics, you said you needed material on”—well, then the rest has all been blacked out, or whited out, I should say. “Sorry I couldn’t get this to you sooner. Hope it helps....” It doesn’t help us, Speaker. There’s nothing on page 1.

1010

Let’s go to page 2, then. The topic again is “Briefing notes.” “Here is what I have so far,” it says. Dash, dash—it’s all whited out, all the way down. “Thanks for your time.”

The next document, Speaker—these are all in the order we received them, and it’s a random pile. There’s a slide deck here—a very interesting slide deck, I might add. It’s called “Greenfield South Site Options.” Let’s see what some of the site options are. “Option 3”—I’m sorry; it’s a blank page.

Let me see. The next slide—sorry, Speaker; it’s whited out. It says, “Ministry of Energy,” and it has also been whited out.

All right, on November 10—let’s have a look at November 10. It’s about the minister’s letter that’s attached. They’re looking for the minister’s signature. So let’s go to the next letter and see the letter—oh, sorry, Speaker; it was blank.

Let’s take a look here at the letter they are bringing that says here, on November 10, that they’re comfortable with the products to hand to Minister Bentley to facilitate his review, in case it’s needed over the weekend. Let’s have a look at the product they provided. Oh, sorry, Speaker; it’s also blank.

Let’s have a look here. “They would like to commence a dialogue with you on the most appropriate way to allocate the compensation between the OPA and the crown.” Great; that’s going to be the next letter. Blank.

“In response to your attached letter”—blank.

Speaker, you can see the theme that I will continue on for another 10 or so minutes. It completely exposes the House leader’s comment—his insistence—that we have received all documents.

Let’s have a look here. Oh, this one’s interesting. Rebecca just handed me an envelope addressed to Minister Bentley, and it says, “Hi” so-and-so. “We’d like to show you the letters as they currently stand.” Let’s look at

the—oh, sorry, Speaker; the letters are both here. They’re blank.

Let’s move on a little later in the day now, 2:48 that same afternoon. “The energy minister’s letter is also attached.” Let’s read it, then. Oh, sorry, Speaker; it’s blank.

We can go to the next page. This is all in order off the thumb disk that they gave us. “Confidential and privileged draft for discussion:

“Dear Minister”—blank.

“Confidential and privileged”—this one has a new sentence—“in contemplation of litigation: Draft for discussion.”

Interjection: Blank.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Blank. All right; I’m sure we’re getting somewhere here, Speaker.

“The energy letter mirrors the new language not to proceed with the contract.” Let’s look at that letter. That should be—oh, sorry, Speaker. I can’t tell you; it’s blank.

Here’s another one, the next one in order: “In light of this, the logical next step appears to be to notify Greenfield South that the OPA will not be proceeding with the contract.” Good; let’s look at that—oh, sorry, Speaker; I apologize. It’s blank.

“While full recognition must be given to the ratepayer value and the fair treatment of contractual compartment, as suggested in your letter”—let’s look at that letter, Speaker. That should be—oh, I’m sorry; it’s blank.

Speaker, we’re getting it. Hang on, now. “We need to know about the energy letter to the OPA by 4 p.m. The main change”—and it goes on to describe what’s coming up in the letter. Oh, sorry, Speaker; the letter—it’s nothing.

It’s a little later yet in the day—3:17 now. This is all from the same day. “The energy letter mirrors the new language”—oh, good. Let’s look at the new language, Speaker. Oh, sorry; it’s blank.

Let’s have a peek here. “Last evening, at a meeting with the Premier’s office, there was a reference to the gas plant”—oh, the next page. Sorry, Speaker; it’s blank.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Would you please take your seat.

It is 10:15, and just before we recess, I want to inform the House about the meeting time structure. We will recess now until 10:30. Debate will continue until 11:30, at which time we will recess until 3 p.m. Debate will then continue until 6 p.m., at which time we will adjourn until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Chair (Mrs. Julia Munro): A point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think that’s great that we are recessing, because probably by 10:30, all of those blank pages that Mr. Fedeli—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That’s not a point of order. Thank you. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General on a point of order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know that this is a somewhat unusual day, but I would like to take this opportunity to introduce a number of people from Kingston that are here today for Kingston Advocacy Day. I would hope that all the members of the Legislature on all sides would be able to join us in the committee rooms on the second floor to taste some of the hospitality from the Kingston area. Remember, Kingston was the home of Sir John A. Macdonald, our first Prime Minister, and the home of Oliver Mowat, the longest-serving Premier of this province.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: And home of John Gerretsen.

Hon. John Gerretsen: That's right.

Welcoming them today—and they're just coming in—I'd like to introduce Mayor Mark Gerretsen and Councillors Rick Downes, Jeff Scott, Sandy Berg, Liz Schell, Dorothy Hector, Brian Reitzel and Bryan Paterson.

As well, we have a number of people from the city of Kingston utilities staff, including Gerard Hunt, who's the CAO of the city of Kingston. We have members here from the chamber of commerce. We also have Chris Whyman here, the world champion town crier, who has been town-crying in the Kingston area for 25 years; members from Queen's University, St. Lawrence College—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In a normal routine, that would not be a point of order. It is, even under these circumstances, not a point of order. I thank the member for his lengthy introduction and recognize that under these circumstances we are to move right into the continuation—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On a point of order from the member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just on a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to welcome Runnymede Public School to the House: one of the best public schools in the world. Great to have you here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think I've opened up a Pandora's box, because I believe the member from Etobicoke Centre has a point of order as well.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order. I would like to welcome Mr. Kerry Adler from SkyPower, and Hando Kang, who used to work with us in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I appreciate that. I'm sure that the member from Ajax–Pickering has a point of order that is going to be quick.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will certainly do as you direct. I'm pleased to introduce to you directors of Nation at Prayer with us this morning: Neil Hodgson, Brenda Hodgson, Mel Finlay and Susan Finlay. Thank you for your leniency, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the spirit of fair play, if there are members who want to finish this non-point of order, please do so.

I thank all members for their patience. We do welcome our guests and try to do our best to encourage them to be here, so thank you all for being here.

It is now time for further debate. The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. In the 14 minutes I have remaining, I will continue where I started. I picked up a pile this morning of the documents that the Liberal House leader said contains all of the files that we asked for. This is called "Mississauga, 23 of 33."

Let me read from some of these all-inclusive files that have exposed everything to us. "August 22: Greenfield South project issue note"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I want to start right away. Your member is speaking and I want to make sure I focus on that, so let's keep that down. I also ask that we are very respectful under these circumstances to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to say what they need to say. I think that would be very encouraging for all of us.

The member from Nipissing: Continue, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "Greenfield South project issue note:

"On the rest of the topics, you said you needed material on"—Speaker, I'm sorry; the rest of it has been whited out. "Sorry I couldn't get this to you sooner. Hope it helps at some point." Well, not very helpful when it has been whited out.

Here's another one, the next day. "Here is what I have so far"—dash, whited out, dash, whited out, dash, whited out—"Hope this helps."

Let's look at the slide show. They've got a slide deck here, Speaker, that's very informative. It's called "Greenfield South site options." This should be very interesting. There should be some very good site options here. Oh—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Let's look at the next page. Oh, sorry, Speaker, it has been whited out. We can't get to that.

Let's start on the correspondence; perhaps we'll get into something here. "Last evening at a meeting with the Premier's office, there was reference to a gas plant." That should be an interesting letter; let's look at it. Oh, sorry, Speaker, it has been blanked out.

"See the Attorney General's comment. Attached is the first letter." Now we're getting somewhere. We're going to get the first letter. Oh, sorry, Speaker, it's blank.

These are all in order, off the thumb disk we received from the House leader.

"As discussed, here is the draft document." Finally, Speaker, we're going—oh, I'm sorry, it's blank. Well, I don't know what to say.

Oh, good. "Here is what we just sent up. Please see the Attorney General's comment below." Now we're—oh sorry, Speaker, it's blank.

Oh, this is good. Now we've got somewhere. These are all in order of how we received them. This is a contract between Greenfield South Power and Ontario Power Authority. Oh, sorry, Speaker, it's blank.

Oh, that one's blank.

Okay. The next letter here "constitutes confidential information." Oh, this is going to be a good one. Hang on a second—oh, Speaker, it's blank.

Let's see. What have we got here? This one is kind of fun. "Minister Bentley wants finance and cabinet behind him, as you heard last evening, and is still waiting for some indication from the PO redirection." Oh, good. That's in the next letter here. Oh. It's been blanked out.

"The proposed letter from the minister to the OPA"—oh, sorry, Speaker, it's blank.

Next in order—these are absolutely in order: "In response to the local community's concerns about the Greenfield South generation station, the government has committed to relocate the plant." Now we're into the contract, and—oh, Speaker, it's blank.

The next letter: "As per my earlier discussion with Carolyn, the draft letters"—oh, good, we're going to see them. "The government has stated its intention to relocate the plant. We're still awaiting word on whether the letter can be sent tonight." Well, let's look—oh, Speaker, the letter is blank.

"Hi. Just a heads-up that I told Mike"—hang on, Speaker. We've got it here. "I just told Mike the proposed letter to the OPA is with the minister for"—oh, Speaker, it's blank.

"Carolyn," whoever that is, "as you know, the minister is looking for paper comfort from his colleagues on exposure. Can you please tell me the options available for us on what paper it could be, i.e. cabinet minutes, treasury board order, letter from Dwight"—pardon me for using the first name—"etc., and the pros and cons associated. Deputy, can you please loop in with" so-and-so "on the options?" We're going to see the options now. Ah, they're blank.

This next person, she's working on her response attached. Oh, sorry, the attached response is blank.

"Will you likely want to see our advice re: the energy minister's office before we send this letter?" Oh, sorry, Speaker, the letter is blank.

"I've been talking with Craig and Murray about the issue." Let's look at the discussion. It's been whited out. You're starting to see a theme here, I sense, Speaker.

"Told him we were drafting an extra couple of sentences for the minister's letter and would share. He encouraged us to move as quickly as possible." Well, I'll move as quickly as possible to the letter. It's blank.

Speaker, these are right off the thumb disk, unchanged. This is the pile I printed last night.

Further to the House leader's insistence that we have all the documents, let me carry on.

"Craig asked that the minister's letter to the OPA"—good, we're going to see that; I know we're going to see it next—"include a sentence about engaging with his colleagues in any discussion re: the OPA compensation to

ally Minister Bentley's concerns." Well, let's look at—sorry, Speaker; his concerns are blank.

1040

"We have advised all around that we'll be sending this revised proposed letter to the DAG for review." I'd like to review it here for all the members. I'm sorry; it's blank.

Finally, Speaker, we actually do have it this time. This is the sentence that Minister Bentley went through all this hidden document—we now know the one sentence they have approved, that they have not whited out, whether by accident or not. It says, underlined in bold, "I will be engaging my colleagues in any dialogue with you on the most appropriate way to allocate compensation between the OPA and the crown." Days upon days upon days of hidden documents here to hide what that sentence used to say. On the next page, sadly, we don't know what he was going to say because it's blank.

Speaker, you've obviously sensed my frustration here that—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You want me to add a little bit more? Well, here, Speaker. The new sentence suggests that the colleagues will actually be in the dialogue with the OPA. Now they're refuting that sentence. Maybe that's okay. If not, how about—well, let's see about—sorry, Speaker; it's blank.

There are pros and cons to the reference to talking to others. "Any thoughts on your end?" Sorry, Speaker. I can't show you.

So-and-so had concerns re the letter might make it way into public domain. We can see now why some of these have been blanked out. Here's what would make it into public domain: There's nothing here. I'm sorry, Speaker; there's nothing here.

We now come to a page from the Ontario Power Authority. Speaker, I'd like to show it to you, but the end of it, sorry, is blank. In the remaining six minutes, maybe I'll show just a couple more to get the general theme here. "Joseph, this draft is"—this is about that sentence again. They're still not quite happy with the wording of that sentence. "This draft is the latest version of the proposed letter from the minister." Well, let's have ourselves a little look. Oh, sorry, Speaker. It's blank. "This is the draft, Rick"—but it may not be completely there.

Let's look at something a little more simple now. It's a slide deck. This should be normal, right? This is the Greenfield South slide options. This is a different set than the first one I showed you. Oh, sorry, Speaker. The PowerPoint here has been whited out. I don't know why. I can't imagine why.

In the remaining time I have left—another blank OPA contract. Oh, good. We've got something. Seriously, we do have. "This is the draft, but it may not completely agree with the third option." What's the third option? Oh, sorry, Speaker; it's blank.

"I understand the deputy minister wants to walk a deck into the meeting. I've built a version you've sent me." Let's have a look: "Please see attached." It's blank.

This one here is blank; blank. That one, I don't know why. I understand they've had a look at it and provided input, so this is the input, Speaker. It's blank.

One more just to sort of round it all out, Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I don't know. It's just a blank page. It's in the middle of a slide deck, but Speaker, as you can imagine, it's blank.

"One comment re: slide five": I wonder what that comment is? It's blank.

Speaker, you could imagine our disgust with these documents.

The machines that provide the whiteout must have missed one or two pages. In the remaining four minutes, let me just run you through a little discussion about \$5 million that's been discovered here: "Regarding the proposed payment of the \$5.23 million over time under the NUG contract"—the non-utility generator—"we are okay with the idea"—you'll see where I'm going with this, Speaker—"but we're hoping we could reduce the period to 12 months." So they've got a payment here. Oh, look who it's to. This is very interesting. This payment is from the Ontario Power Authority to Eastern Power. We knew that the closed power plant in Mississauga was \$180 million. Then, the finance minister corrected and said, "No, no, no. There's a \$10-million contract here. It's really \$190 million."

Well, let me tell you what both the finance minister and the energy minister did not want us to know. I'll read this: "In the meantime, I have already asked" so-and-so "to prepare a first cut of the side letter to deal with the assignment of a NUG contract and the proposed adjustment to the monthly payment to reflect the additional compensation to Eastern Power above the \$10-million payment from the OEFC."

Speaker, there's an additional \$5-million bill from this government that they did not disclose to us. So they're asking the solicitor, "Rocco, can you confirm that you have run by Carl the concept of the \$10 million upfront"—that was announced by the minister—"and the other \$5 million through the NUG? This will not come as a surprise, right?" His answer is, "Yes, I have." You can see why all those other documents were whited out; I can't imagine how this one snuck through. He understands that only \$10 million is coming from the OEFC, and the balance will come from a NUG contract. "He pushed for an upfront payment, but I told them we would have a problem accounting for an upfront payment and would prefer an adder to the monthly capacity payment to account for the differential settlement amount." And this is done in what they call a "side letter." It's a side letter all right, Speaker.

I've got to admit, they actually dug a little deeper with a very important question. They asked, "Is the NUG needed for the system? Do we need that fuel? Do we need that power for the system? Do you know?" The answer that came back is, "The NUG is not needed." This is \$5 million more for yet more unneeded power.

This is one example from all of the 36,000 pages which we've had only time to go through a fraction of, Speaker. We've only been able to go through a fraction. We found at least 1,000 blank pages in the ones that I've looked at and our team has looked at. We found \$5 million so far in only a few pages.

But we've also determined it's not \$40 million as they claim. We've got \$200 million, in their own words, for additional transmission. If we move the plant out of Oakville, we need a transmission solution within Oakville. They still need transmission—\$200 million more, and \$210 million for the turbines that they're going to pay still an astronomical price for. That's \$450 million, not \$40 million for Oakville. Add that to the \$190 million for Mississauga. Rounded off, we're talking—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Oh, \$195 million—\$650 million spent to not even generate one megawatt of power.

Speaker, you can see why we need to pursue this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we move to further debate, I want to remind everyone that we do not make any reference to someone's absence. That is the tradition of this place.

Further debate.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As was outlined quite interestingly by the previous speaker, it has become very clear that, within the documents that the government decided to release, there are numerous unexplained redactions, omissions and exclusions. Some of the documents refer to correspondence which isn't even included in the package of materials that the government released. For example, emails note that communication strategies are being approved by the Premier's office, but then there's no correspondence from the Premier's office that was included in the package.

There's a surprising lack of correspondence from individuals such as the energy minister in the package. It kind of seems odd that this is a file whose responsibility lies with the energy minister, and yet there are pretty much no documents from the Minister of Energy in the package. Presumably, the Minister of Energy would have corresponded with someone at some point about some of the significant decisions that were being made in his ministry. Throughout the documents, passages are redacted without any explanation whatsoever. These are some of the things that we put together in a letter that we provided to you this morning, Speaker, indicating that we were quite concerned with what appears to be yet again this government's refusal to provide the information requested at committee.

1050

The government stated that the letters would be written by both the Minister of Energy and the CEO of the Ontario Power Authority attesting to the fact that all responsive records have been delivered without redaction or omission. In fact, we didn't receive those letters with the package. I understand we received them a little bit later, a little bit afterwards; it was one of those "oops" moments, but nonetheless, the package that we received

yesterday was not a complete package on all kinds of different measures.

It's really clear that what the government did was simply throw out enough volume of pages at Ontarians—just throw them out there at everybody—hoping that nobody would realize that, in fact, there were no documents from the minister opposite—no documents from the minister's office; no documents from the Premier's office—in that package; nothing in the package from the Liberal campaign team. Yet these are all relevant pieces of information that should have been included with the package—none of the documents that explain why the government decided to stick hard-working Ontarians with the bill for hundreds of millions of dollars just in order to save a couple of Liberal seats.

In the documents released yesterday, it's really clear that the cancellation of the gas plants will require much, much more money to be spent. It's not my money; it's not the government's money—it's the people's money. It's the people's money that they are spending to save their own seats.

OPA documents that were released yesterday make it very clear that the \$40 million the government paid TransCanada for the Liberals' Oakville seat-saver program is just the tip of the iceberg. Document after document refers to the extra \$200 million that the government will have to pay for transmission upgrades that will now have to be undertaken to keep the lights on in the Oakville area.

How does this government justify wasting well over \$250 million—again, not of my money and not of their money, but of the people's money—to advance their own self-interested political agenda? How do they justify that?

Let's add up what we already know: \$40 million for TransCanada fixed costs and legal fees; \$200 million in Oakville transmission upgrades; \$190 million to cancel the Mississauga gas plant just days before people went to the polls in the 2011 election.

Documents released also show a government that is desperately trying to find a new location for the Oakville plant. That's what they show when you look through the documents—a desperate attempt to find a new spot to move that plant to or to now build that plant at. They first looked at Nanticoke. Then they looked at Kitchener-Waterloo. Then they looked at Napanee.

Did the government actually decide on Napanee because a plant is actually needed there? Or did they decide on Napanee simply because it was the last possible location left that it could offer to TransCanada in order to avoid hundreds of millions of dollars more in payments?

According to the documents, Nanticoke was ruled out for a location in part because the loss of electricity from transporting it 100 kilometres to the western GTA didn't make sense. Excuse me, but Napanee is 250 kilometres from the western GTA. The current plant there only operates one day a month, and there is no mention at all of the need for a new plant in Napanee in the government's long-term energy strategy. Their long-term energy plan does not even talk about the need for a plant in Napanee

or in that area of the province. So it looks like moving the plant to Lennox was absolutely a desperate last resort. Rather than a decision that was based on cost efficiency, good electricity planning or any kind of rational process whatsoever, it was only done as a desperate last resort to try to avoid even more of the people's money being spent on the Liberal seat-saver plan.

We know that those dollars, those hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars, could have been better invested for the people of this province. We could have used their money for much better purposes. Nothing personal against the seats that got saved; nothing personal against those members who happen to have benefited from those hundreds of millions of dollars, those Liberal MPPs—it's not personal against them. But I would think the people of this province would want their dollars invested in the kinds of things that actually matter to them, that actually make life better for them, because really, that's what we're supposed to be here doing as elected officials in the province of Ontario. That's what we're supposed to be addressing—the problems, the needs, the concerns and the worries of the people of Ontario, not the political fortunes, the political well-being of the five or six MPPs who were able to get their seats saved by that massive investment of public dollars. It's a shame.

Yesterday we were talking about the ONTC, Ontario Northland. We were talking about the fact that there are young people, students, who, for the first time, are going to need to travel home for Thanksgiving dinner, for Thanksgiving weekend with their families, who are now not going to be able to take the train to do that because the Liberals would rather spend hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars—they think it's funny. Speaker, they're actually laughing across the way.

I hear the Attorney General laughing about this. Somehow it's funny that these students are not going to be able to take the train home on Thanksgiving weekend for their visits with their families because, instead of investing—what is it?—\$10 million?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Fourteen.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —\$14 million on the ONTC, they would rather spend—what?—\$300 million, \$400 million on saving Liberal seats: \$600 million?

Mr. Paul Miller: Six hundred million.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is really unbelievable. It is an unbelievable choice and decision that this cynical, cynical government has made.

But those numbers really pale in comparison to what we know this government is capable of, and I think that is the crux of the matter here. The government has basically demonstrated, in its behaviour yesterday and the documents that they released, that they have no commitment to, no willingness to and no sense of obligation to be open and transparent with the people of this province. They don't think that they have any responsibility to provide documents that are requested by the members of this Legislature. I think that's the worst part of this entire story. It's not even the dollars; it's the lows

that this government will sink to for its own political benefit.

Let's not forget: This is a party that was first elected on a message of change, on a promise of transparency, a promise of change and a promise of putting people first. They are obviously so engaged in the cynical political games that they used to crow against that they have no actual resemblance to the party that ran to first get elected to govern this province years ago. It is so, so obvious that they have completely, completely lost their way.

You know what? The saddest part of that is that this tired, out-of-gas government has been ignoring, while they're taking care of their own couple of members, the families in this province, the very people who are paying the freight for that seat-saver program. Those are the people who are being ignored: people who are struggling to pay the bills, people who are still having a hard time dealing with the aftermath of the recession and those folks who used to earn a decent wage and are now struggling to make ends meet on half the salary that they used to bring home, those same people who are actually paying the highest electricity bills in the country. They're paying the highest electricity bills in the country for one simple reason, Speaker: It's because this government is intent and has been intent upon penning these private power deals with these private power interests, and that's what's driving electricity costs up in the province of Ontario. Private power costs more.

1100

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry for the interruption, but I'm starting to hear too much sidebar activity, and I'd ask them to stop it.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Durham, not only being in his seat, is talking in the middle of my conversation again. I'm asking for control.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I see the clock, and I don't need to be reminded. She will get the time. Thank you.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Private power costs more. It actually costs more—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew does not start up when I finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Not only does it cost more, but by the very nature of the fact that it's private companies that provide it, it actually hides information and the facts from the people. These private power deals are structured to actually hide information from the public, Speaker. That is why it is the wrong way to go when it comes to our electricity system.

In fact, when we used to have a public electricity system in Ontario, our electricity rates were very, very, very competitive—very competitive. Our people in this province, our households, our homeowners, were not paying the highest electricity rates in the country. We are now,

now that we have private power in Ontario. The industrial sector, the manufacturing sector, the mining sector and the forestry sector weren't paying the highest electricity rates in the country. They are now. Maybe that's why we don't have any manufacturing left. Maybe that's why forestry is devastated. Maybe that's why we have such a problem with our economy: because the electricity bills are uncompetitive. That's what has happened under this government's watch.

Speaker, in Canada, there are all kinds of different electricity rates, as we know. But in Ontario, we pay about double of what they pay in the adjacent provinces—let's say Manitoba—and we pay more than double of what they're paying in Quebec. It's absolutely unacceptable—absolutely unacceptable.

As I said off the top, the government promised change and yet they're delivering more of the same. They were elected on an idea, on a plan to make all contracts public. In fact, in this House during question period, a number of times, I've raised the quotes that the Premier used to speak, talking about the fact that contracts would be public, that they believed in transparency, that they believed that the people had the right to know. Well, Speaker, we believe that the people have the right to know, and that's why we're in the process that we're in today. That's why we're having this conversation. That's why we're taking this extraordinary action right now, just to get the basic information to the people of this province, the people who are actually paying the bill.

Now, we've only had a couple of hours to look at the documents, and we know that there are many, many omissions already, so we're going to continue to pore through those documents. But I think the biggest concern that we have is that the government is going to conclude that, notwithstanding all of this work that we're going to be doing—they still think it was an appropriate way to respond. That's the thing that I find worrisome.

Today, we heard the government's comments already, and we'll be hearing more of their comments in the debate. I look forward to that. I hope the people of this province have a chance to tune in to hear what Liberals have to say about their behaviour, because my worry is, from what I've heard already, that what they're trying to do is somehow blame this side of the House for this awful mess. They're trying to somehow say that us doing our due diligence as an opposition party, doing what we're supposed to do—which is hold the government to account, which is to get the information that we need to hold the government to account—is somehow the wrong thing to do.

How does that make sense, Speaker? How does it make sense that us doing our job, holding the government to account—actually, just simply reminding them about what they used to think: that contracts should be available to the public, open and transparent. We're just doing our job, yet I understand—and I fear—that the government is somehow indicating that we're doing something inappropriate, that we're doing something harmful, that we're doing something wrong. I think what

that government really needs is a big mirror on this side so that they can look themselves in the face and decide what it is that they're here for. Are they here for themselves in that mirror or are they here for the people?

What we've seen, unfortunately, for two years now is a government trying to hide the information, trying to prevent the information from coming out. Two years down the road, we saw yesterday the government continuing with that same direction. They have tried every trick in the book to prevent the information from coming out. They've tried every trick in the book to avoid the disclosure of the documents.

I only hope, for the people of the province, as we go through the debate on this motion and these amendments over the next little while, that we have a government that shows a little bit of humility and takes a little bit of responsibility for the way that they've behaved, because it is not parliamentary to prevent information from getting to a member who has requested it. That's the end of the story. It is against the traditions, the history and the rules of this Legislature. That's the conversation we'll likely be having, once this motion goes through the House and gets into committee.

But I have to say that I'm a little bit concerned, notwithstanding the process that we are seized with now, that we will still, at the end of the day, have a government that refuses to acknowledge what their obligation was. That, for me, is the most frightening piece of all. When these kinds of things happen—they don't happen often; they happen quite rarely. But when they happen, they should be reminding not only the sitting government but any governments in waiting of what the proper way to behave in this Legislature is and what the proper respect that is due the members of this Legislature looks like. I think in their arrogance, in their many years in power, they forgot. They forgot that they actually have an obligation to the other members as well as to this Legislative Assembly and to the people of this province.

They were elected on a promise of change. They've been delivering more of the same old politics. They were elected on a promise to make contracts public; they're not doing it. They were elected on a promise to keep electricity affordable. That's not happening either; we have the highest rates in Canada. They were elected on a promise to take the politics out of power. I think this day shows very clearly that that's the last thing they've done. They have certainly not taken the politics out of power.

We're going to be continuing to talk to this motion for the next little while, but I want to end by saying that it gives me no pleasure to be having this conversation. It gives me no pleasure. It gives me a great deal of disappointment and a great deal of concern, because when a government stoops to this kind of low, we have big, big problems in this province—big, big problems. Hopefully, through the committee process and through this debate, we'll be able to solve some of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all start off by saying, on a comment that the leader of the third party

just made, I have always worked on the assumption that we are all here, on all sides of the House, for the people of Ontario. That is the way it has been and that is the way it's going to be.

When you look at the advances that have been made in our health care system over the last eight years, in our educational system over the last eight years; when you look at the number of people who now have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let me start right away. Quite frankly—

Interjection.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Transportation, come to order.

I want to start right away—stop the clock, please. Sorry.

I want to start right away by indicating to you that my expectation is the same as I said at the very beginning: I want to hear everybody. There were very few comments being made while each of the members from each party spoke, from the government side, and that includes the person who just said “yes.” I'm not here to be referee. I'm asking you to carefully give consideration to all the comments that are being made in a respectful way. And yes, there are temptations to make comment, but this is not the spot to do that, and I will be forceful on this.

Attorney General?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'm going to take a somewhat different approach than what they are probably expecting. If they just listen for a moment, then I will try to enunciate what I think about this whole thing.

There have been significant advances made in our health care system—the number of people who have a family doctor now—the fact that we've got smaller class sizes in the educational field; the fact that so many more students are going to university and college—these are all positive moves.

Now, let me also say that I have always worked on the theory that I respect each and every member in this—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. In the standing orders, it's very clear that when a member is to debate a motion or a government motion or a government bill or a private member's bill, the member is expected to speak to the matter at hand, and in this case, we're talking about contempt of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am listening very carefully for the direction of the debate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While I'm standing and while I'm speaking, I'm not supposed to hear anyone else making comments.

I'm sure the member will get to the motion.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Perhaps the previous speaker or interrupter didn't realize what I said. I said I respect

every member of this House. We may see the world a little bit differently, we may see the solutions to the issues a little bit differently, but each and every one of us brings something to the table from which the government, from which the people of Ontario can benefit in the long run. That's always been my approach and that will continue to be my approach. I will not get involved in any personal attacks. I don't think I ever have here in 17 years. I don't intend to start now.

I also think this is a highly unusual day. I'm sure some of the other people who have been here since 1995 or before can't quite recall a day quite like this. I'm sure that the people of Ontario would prefer to have us be in question period right now where the opposition can truly hold the government accountable on an issue-by-issue basis, which is important.

All the points that were made this morning, all the points that have been made eloquently by the official opposition and by the third party, have been made here, I would say, for the last three or four months on a day-to-day basis. So what I'm interested in is how we move forward from this.

A lot of the members may not realize, but this debate can, in effect, go on for the next two to three years because everybody can speak 20 minutes to every motion, to the motion itself; every member can move an amendment; there can be no more than two amendments on the floor at any one time, and you can spend another 20 minutes. So this could literally go on for years. That is the reality of the situation. So how do we move forward?

I can remember a day—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Hon. John Gerretsen: It'll be your turn to speak a little bit later on.

How do we move forward? Sooner or later, Speaker, the House leaders will have to get together and resolve this issue. That's the only way we can move forward. I'm sure the people that are watching this are saying, "Are these people really dealing, on all sides of the House, with the real issues that affect us on a day-to-day basis?"

There are many issues that affect people, particularly the most vulnerable in our society, that we should be addressing here on an ongoing basis, and we're not doing that.

Why don't we invoke the memory of such great House leaders as Bob Welch and Tom Wells or—who did we have over there?—Stephen Lewis, and even, yes, your Bob Rae at the time, or Sean Conway and Jim Bradley. These people were able to work in a co-operative way to get us out of this kind of mess. Right now, all we're doing collectively, by keeping this debate going day after day after day, is shutting out the people of Ontario from the real issues that happen.

There are a number of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. I'm not going to stop trying.
Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: There are a number of former mayors, councillors and school board representatives here, and even some of the new members who have just arrived here, who could tell you that, quite frankly, the level of debate that takes place at most of our municipal councils and our school boards across this province is a heck of a lot better than most of the debate that takes place here. Everybody walks in with their talking points, and you've got your talking points and you've got your—
Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Yes, we have our talking points. I've got no talking points here at all, by the way. I've got no talking points here at all; okay?

All I know, Speaker, is that for the benefit of the people of Ontario, this issue has to be resolved, and however we resolve it in the long run ultimately will be judged by the people of Ontario whenever the next election takes place. Whether you like it or not, the people—last October 6, was it?—have spoken. They elected us back into government—with a minority; I realize that. Being in a minority government, we should be working collectively between all the three parties to come up with the best possible policies. Speaker, what I'm quite frankly saying is, I would implore the House leaders to get together as soon as possible to get us out of this current situation.

You have all known the Minister of Energy, those of you who have been here for eight years, as an honourable individual, in the same way that he regards each and every one of you as an honourable individual. He is an honourable individual and there's no question about that. He has served this province as Attorney General—my current capacity—for four years. He has been an outstanding practising lawyer in the London area. He has opened law clinics. He has taught at the law school in London etc. He is an individual of the highest integrity, in the same way that each and every one of you is of the highest integrity.

Having said all that, we can all get very sanctimonious, and we all get the partisan concerns involved in all of this; I realize that. You think you've got a good issue and you're going to keep pounding it. In the meantime, the business of the province of Ontario, for the people of Ontario, simply isn't being carried on, and that, I find, is a real shame.

I would dare say that there hasn't been a government anywhere that couldn't have done some things a little bit better, whether it was the 42 years of the Tory reign or the five years of the Bob Rae government. Things can always be done a little bit better.

There's no question about it: From hindsight, the two plants in Mississauga and Oakville never should have been approved. I think there's common agreement by everybody on that. You said so during the election campaign; we said so during the election campaign. The reality is, it has now been moved—by the way, not to the Napanee area. It's Bath, actually, where it's going to, or Loyalist township. That's where the plant is actually going to.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: They don't know their geography.

Interjection: It's Greater Napanee.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, it's Greater Napanee. It's Greater Napanee. I think I can see the stacks of the current Lennox station from my house, actually, across the lake, but that's totally immaterial.

Speaker, we all come here to do the best that we can for our own communities. I sometimes wish that we could leave our partisan attitudes at the door on all sides—on all sides—and start dealing with the real issues that we face in this province.

1120

It's your role to hold us accountable. I don't have any, any issue or problem with that at all. You have to hold us accountable. I still think that the best way and the parliamentary way in which a government is held accountable is on a day-to-day basis during question period. So I would strongly suggest, if for no other reason, that the House leaders resolve this issue or try to resolve this issue so that you can continue to hold us accountable during question period.

I see my good friend from Oxford there. He and I were both, many years ago, in another life or, as my son, the mayor out there refers to it—the mayor of Kingston is here, by the way, Mark—“It's so long ago, it was the Stone Age.” But, you know, we worked collectively. He saw things a little bit differently from me, but somehow, we were able to collectively advance the aspects, advance the interests of municipal government etc. I sometimes wish that we had that same kind of attitude in here.

I've been on that side. I know how frustrating it can be. I was there for eight years. I understand totally how you feel, believe it or not. Let me also say it is very easy to criticize everything. You can always find a reason to criticize something. It's the same thing with you folks: You always find a reason. You can always find a reason to criticize something. There's no reason about it. Now, to actually do something and have it benefit the people of Ontario, that is something totally different. I think we have shown as a government, over the last eight to nine years, that the people of Ontario have benefitted from the good, positive government that the McGuinty government has brought to the province of Ontario in so many, many different areas.

Those folks over there in the official opposition, they will tell you that if we just cut taxes, it's going to resolve all the issues in the world. What they never say at the same time—and to me, it ain't rocket science—is that if you cut taxes and you have fewer resources, you're going to have fewer services. They've never told us what they're actually going to cut. Are they going to cut health care? Are they going to cut education? Are they going to cut environmental rules and regulations? I could just go on and on and on.

Those folks over there, they're kind-hearted folks, too, the New Democrats—although quite often, they sound like the old democrats. The progressive attitude that they used to have doesn't seem to be there anymore. As far as

they're concerned, all the problems can be resolved if we just tax people more. I don't know what the ultimate limit is, to what level people should be taxed, but, “We can do anything we can if we just get more money from people.”

What we've brought to this province over the last eight to nine years and will continue to do in the future is a balanced approach. There's a balance in everything and there should be a balance in the way we deal with issues as well.

Look, we're all part of a team. You're part of your team; you're part of your team; I'm part of this team. On an individual basis, there may be the odd decision that is made by your team and your team and your team that an individual member may not always totally agree with.

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm sure even the old democrats have that from time to time. So you go with the basic direction or philosophy that that political party believes in or advocates etc.

In the last few minutes that I have, Speaker, I would hope that since we are in a minority Parliament situation—and it is a minority Parliament situation. The only way that the people of Ontario are going to benefit from the actions that we take here is by collectively working together better than we have in the past.

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: No, I've been there, done that. I won't do it again. Okay? You can quote me on that. That's the best thing that ever happened to me, that I didn't become leader, I'll tell you that. I wouldn't be here right now. That's the best thing that ever happened to me. But I will stack up the other 12 elections that I've won without a defeat over the last 40 years against them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: I understand why the member is taking this line of communication—because the actions of his government have been indefensible—but I would ask that he speak to the motion on the table, and the motion is that we have these documents turned over to the committee, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order. I remind the member to stay focused on the motion that we're talking about. The lenience is starting to get a little thin.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you, Speaker. It was the interjection about a leadership race that one of the Conservative members mentioned that brought me back to a historical perspective of my own involvement many, many years ago.

Look, the bottom line is this: We've got to get out of this dilemma that we're in right now, and the only way that that's going to happen is by the three House leaders getting together tomorrow, a month from today, six months from today, a year from today. Sooner or later, that's the only way it's going to be resolved, so I would just urge and implore them, for the benefit of all of the people of Ontario, to do that as soon as possible so that we can get on with the business of running this govern-

ment and this Parliament, and so that you can get on with asking questions that need to be asked on a day-to-day basis.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It being close to 11:30, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1127 to 1500.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good afternoon. Further debate.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the amendment to the amendment of the motion of contempt against the Minister of Energy put forward by my colleague the honourable member from Cambridge.

This is a very sad day for the province of Ontario. Not since 1908 have we come this close to finding someone in contempt of this Legislature, but it is an action that must be taken, Mr. Speaker, because the government has shown nothing but disdain for the people of Ontario and their right to know how their tax dollars are being spent.

I've heard from people in some corners that say this measure we're undertaking today, the motion of contempt, is no longer necessary because the government, at the 11th hour, and under threat, has now handed over some of the documents. To those people, I say this: We don't have all of the documents. In fact, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of pages missing. There isn't a single document, email or letter from the real decision-makers in the package that was presented.

The energy minister already told the estimates committee who made the decision to forfeit hundreds of millions of tax dollars—and we think it's up to 645 million tax dollars—on the fiasco to move the Oakville and Mississauga power plants. The minister himself made it clear that it was the Liberal campaign team that made the decision, yet there's oddly no record of that in the 36,000 pages of documents we've received thus far.

There's also nothing from the Premier or his staff, nothing from the Minister of Energy or his staff and nothing from the Liberal campaign gurus or their staff.

Even more troubling are the instances where they've just blatantly withheld information. In one Ontario Power Authority document, there is one whole blank page that simply says, "Exhibit P"—this is in quotes—"Intentionally Deleted." In another, they've clearly blacked out the contents of an email, but you can, if you squint, easily see that the words "political activity" were amongst the words redacted, and that was from one of the lawyers at the OPA. This is a further breach of privilege, and it shows more contempt of this House, I would argue, Mr. Speaker. That's the first red flag, and it's a very, very serious one.

The next is this: If you catch a child shoplifting and force them to return the chocolate bar to the store owner, you still reprimand the child. Whether you take away his allowance, set a curfew or admonish his bad behaviour, there's still a lesson to be learned and a penalty to pay.

In this case, the Speaker—you, Mr. Speaker—has already ruled that a *prima facie* case of breach of privilege has been found because of the government's failure to

release the documents that the estimates committee first asked for last May. In other words, the Liberals wasted hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money and then broke the law and hid the documents. That's a pretty serious offence. And it isn't a game, Speaker, as some, in the hallways, have suggested on the opposite side.

The committee has the right and the power to request documents just like any court of law. If you do not produce the documents, there is a penalty, just like in a court of law. It is extremely troubling that this government seems to think that they can determine what is in the public interest, absent of any scrutiny. It's extremely sad that the public interest has been circumvented by political interference.

As legislators, it's now our duty to vote on whether or not we concur with the Speaker's ruling, and if we do, that we allow this matter to be sent to committee so that we can investigate why it is that the government refused to share the documents and why it is that they wasted hundreds of millions of tax dollars with nothing to show for it—some \$645 million so far, Mr. Speaker. This motion is also going to help us verify that we've received all of the documents, because it's clear that we haven't.

This is the job of the opposition. We are here to keep the government accountable, and that is what we are doing with this motion and with the amendment to the amendment and the amendment itself put forward by the honourable member from Cambridge: holding the Liberals accountable for stonewalling the duly elected members of this Legislature for months and months and hiding the true cost of their seat-saver scheme from the people of Ontario.

Let me remind the members of the government how we arrived at this point today.

It was on Wednesday, May 16, that the Standing Committee on Estimates passed a motion that required the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to provide the committee with documents relating to the Oakville and Mississauga power plants. That is the right of the members of the estimates committee, as it is the right of all members of committees in this House and in similar Parliaments across the Commonwealth.

On May 30, the Minister of Energy responded to the request, stating, "In light of the confidential, privileged and highly commercially sensitive nature of these issues, it would not be appropriate for my office or the ministry to disclose information that would prejudice these ongoing negotiations and litigation." The Ontario Power Authority provided similar reasoning.

Obviously, Speaker, that was a ruse. The government House leader told me on Friday last that they needed six more weeks to come to a deal with the proponents and that the documents would remain secret until that time. When I told him, "No way; we're not going to allow you to do this any longer," the Liberals miraculously came to a deal in 48 hours. That says a lot about the truthfulness of the government's original excuse concerning their refusal to release the documents.

Back to the chronology: As a result of the minister's refusal to produce the documents on May 30, the com-

mittee sent a report to the House advising the Speaker that a possible contempt of the Legislature has occurred.

On July 11, the minister provided some documents to the committee, referring only to the Mississauga power plant. However, the documents provided were far from complete, just like the documents we were given a few hours ago—yesterday.

The energy minister stated in the letter attached to the documents that “certain information remains subject to privilege and is not being included.” Minister Bentley also failed to provide any documents pertaining to the Oakville power plant, as requested by the committee on May 16.

When the House returned early for consideration of Bill 115, the Putting Students First Act, in late August, the Chair of the estimates committee reported to the House that the Minister of Energy breached the privilege of the members and the powers of the committee. It was then that the member for Cambridge rose on a point of privilege, explaining that his rights as a member of this House had been violated.

On September 13, you, Mr. Speaker, ruled that a *prima facie* breach occurred, and you ordered the minister to table the documents within 10 days, as Parliament has an absolute right to call for people, papers and things under the law.

Over those 10 days, the House leaders met more than five times to seek a resolution, and it wasn't until September 20 that the Liberals proposed a solution that would only allow a secret review of the documents.

As members may recall, the first proposal was to lock us up, but at that time they told us there were 50,000 to 100,000 documents—we only have 36,000, so that's a little suspicious—and they repeated that on several occasions at these meetings.

The proposal was to lock one member from each party in a room with one staff member—no outside experts or lawyers or anything like that—and we were to go through 50,000 to 100,000 documents.

Interjection: How long would that take?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, obviously, that would take us six months.

The second one was we would have a couple of judges do that for us. I think both the PCs and the NDP consistently said, “No, that's not transparency, openness and honesty.”

The people of Ontario deserve to know what the seat-saver program cost—the most egregious example of wasted money in my 22 years here in the House and, I think, ever. That you would spend more than \$645 million—you know, when people make campaign promises, normally at least there's a hospital, or a highway to drive on afterwards. You get nothing for \$645 million and counting. I think the Liberal Party of Ontario should pay it, and I don't care if it takes you a thousand years. You should be paying that, not the taxpayers of Ontario.

Here we are, debating a contempt motion, not just because the government stonewalled us for months, but because the government has handed over incomplete

documents and has not fulfilled the request of the members of this House.

1510

I thought that Matt Gurney made some good points about the game that the government is playing in the National Post over the weekend. He clearly gets it, and I'd like to read some of his column into the record. The piece is entitled “McGuinty Demands the Opposition Stop Playing Political Games with His Political Game.”

Mr. Gurney wrote: “The day after the Speaker of the Ontario Legislature ruled that the Liberals had *prima facie* breached the privileges of the Legislature in refusing to hand over documents requested by the opposition, Premier Dalton McGuinty struck back. Or at least he tried to.

“The matter relates to the cancellation of two proposed power plants by the McGuinty Liberals. The Liberals had insisted, for years, that the plants were needed to meet electricity needs in the greater Toronto area. They stuck to their guns on this even in the face of intense and sustained local opposition to the plants. But ahead of last fall's provincial election, when it became clear that the Liberals were in a fight for their political lives and could easily lose the next election, poof. The power plants were cancelled. The Liberals ended up holding the seats and winning a strong minority government.”

Mr. Gurney continues: “At the time, they denied their actions were politically motivated. No one believed them, and Energy Minister Chris Bentley eventually confirmed the obvious—the decision to cancel the plants did indeed come from the Liberal election campaign and not from the government. The Liberals have tried to hide the costs of the cancellation from the voters, however. They were eventually forced to admit that cancelling a plant in Mississauga cost the taxpayers at least \$190 million that the province doesn't have. But the Liberals have refused to release documents concerning the cost of cancelling another plant, this one in Oakville. It is their refusal to release those documents that resulted in the finding of a *prima facie* breach of privilege.

“That's a very fast overview of a complicated situation,” Mr. Gurney wrote. “But the key points are this—the Liberals made a purely political decision that cost the taxpayers huge money, and they are obviously reluctant to release documents that would establish exactly how much money it cost. And they are sticking to that. On Friday, the day after the ruling, when the opposition parties were demanding the Liberals release the documents immediately, Premier McGuinty again refused, saying two things: That the negotiations concerning the Oakville plant's cancellation are not yet complete and that releasing the figures could harm that process, and, also, that the opposition should stop playing political games.”

Speaker, as I mentioned, we now know that the Premier's first excuse was nonsense, given yesterday's announcement that a deal had been reached just 48 hours after your ruling, but I'll read on. Mr. Gurney continues that the “second argument is patently absurd. It's the Liberals who are playing political games with other

people's money. They've been doing so from the beginning. They still are. They clearly wish to continue doing that. In calling them out on it and demanding that the documents detailing the government's use of taxpayer monies be released, the opposition isn't playing games. They're calling out the Liberals for their games.

"It's undeniable, of course, that the opposition are seeking political advantage. But that's par for the course. Hammering your opponents when they're vulnerable on a legitimate matter of public interest isn't playing games. It's literally the job of the opposition. And, let it be noted, no less an authority on legitimate government business than the Speaker of the Legislature has already agreed that the opposition is within their rights to ask for the information. Games are certainly being played here, but by the Liberals, not the opposition."

Mr. Gurney's article ends with: "The Liberals tried to play games with taxpayers' money to win elections, and got caught. There's no way around that now. It's time for them to fess up. Until then, at the very least, it would behoove them to stop accusing the opposition of playing games. Their house is made of glass far too fragile to long survive the throwing of those kinds of stones."

Mr. Speaker, I thought that column summed up the situation pretty well, from how we got here to where we're at today.

The other point I wanted to address is this nonsense we hear from the Liberals that we would have made the same ridiculous decision had we been in government. What the government doesn't seem to understand is that we would never have built the plants in the first place. It has always been our policy that we build projects in willing host communities. I was the energy minister from 1997 to 2002, and that was always my party's policy when it comes to gas plants, wind turbines, solar projects or any other energy project. If it was not welcome and not wanted, then we wouldn't build it there in the first place. That's always been our policy.

But it has never been the policy of the Liberal Party. They are building wind turbines in places where they are not welcome and at prices Ontario families simply cannot afford. The Liberals tried to build gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga, two places where they were never welcome. That's the difference between their party and our party. We would have never gone down this road in the first place, and history makes that very clear.

Speaker, we need a full and complete investigation into this matter. Passing this motion will allow us to get to the bottom of this fiasco. It will help ensure that no future government stonewalls the people of Ontario like this, and it will help us get to the bottom of what the true costs of cancelling this plant really are, because it's painfully obvious that despite a ruling of this type and despite the public shaming they have already received, the government is continuing to hide documents and break the law.

In the few minutes I have left, Mr. Speaker, I implore the government to come forward with the rest of the documents and to adhere to and obey the Speaker's

ruling to give us all of the documents. This argument that we aren't entitled to any documents coming out of the Liberal Party of Ontario in communication with the government is absolute rubbish. You're hiding behind the technical detail that we didn't ask for it in our original motion, but the fact of the matter is, we asked for all documents. The committee asked for all documents—

Interjection: Everything related.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Everything related. The fact of the matter is, it was only a few days ago that your Minister of Energy, Mr. Bentley, admitted that the origin of this decision—where this decision came from—was the Liberal Party of Ontario. It's disingenuous of you. It's not right—I'm not allowed to say what I really think, but it's not right—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): But you did use some—a word that I'm concerned a little bit about, so please. It has been going really well. Let's stay that way, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respect your ruling.

You'd have to be not of sound mind to not know that when we ask for all of the documents—and who made the decision was the Liberal Party of Ontario—we need to see the communications between the Liberal Party of Ontario and the government of Ontario.

The media has been reporting that the cancellation of the Oakville plant is \$40 million. That's laughable, and the government should be ashamed that they hung that figure out there and it stayed out there about 24 hours. Now they're all catching on that you're going to pay TransCanada pipelines \$210 million for their turbines, and you have this absolutely bizarre story that anyone in their right mind wouldn't believe that because power from the plant that's now going to be moved to eastern Ontario will be slightly less in cost than it was from Oakville, by \$2,000 a month—it's \$17,000 per megawatt hour versus \$15,000 and change, but you're paying TransCanada \$210 million, which you forgot to tell the public yesterday, for their turbines, and you say, "Well, we'll get that back because the cost is lower." If I take \$2,000 a month and I divide that into \$210 million, I come up to well over 800 years as the payback period for that kind of money, so your argument is ridiculous. The minister went out yesterday—"Payback will be in 10 years." It's over 800 years.

So we've got \$40 million, \$210 million, and lo and behold, you know what? We still have the problem we had, and that is, how do we get power to the southwest part of the GTA? Well, apparently we're going to spend \$200 million in new transmission lines from eastern Ontario—and that's just the minimum, I know; we're still digging in these documents—to bring that power all the way back to the southwest corner of the GTA.

If you people don't get thrown out of office over this, then there's something terribly wrong. We're going to do our best, along with the NDP, to hold you accountable, to get this into committee, to have these Liberal Party officials brought forward, to have the experts brought

forward—to have these lawyers at the OPA, who are ashamed to be writing these memos back and forth to each other because they know that you threw them out of the bus. And they mentioned on so many occasions that it was the Premier's office, after direction from the campaign, that made them make decisions and implement this power deal, the seat-saver program, against their will. I look forward to committee.

1520

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was hoping to get away and have a chat with somebody, but it doesn't look like that's going to happen.

Let me just say in the outset, in this particular circumstance, that it's rather regrettable that we're in this situation. The government last spring found itself where the committee had requested some documents, and at that particular time the government had ample opportunity to be able to provide those documents to the committee in a way that would have satisfied the requirements by the committee. It was pretty clear that the government could have done that.

For whatever reason, and we can get into it ad infinitum, but needless to say the government decided that it was going to obstruct that process, and rather than try to find a way forward last May, when these documents were being requested for the Oakville/Mississauga plants—rather than provide the documents as we had asked, as New Democrats, two years ago on the Oakville power plant, the government put itself in a position of essentially giving the committee members no other choice but to move a motion of contempt. And so here we are.

If the government would have done what it should have done way back when we asked two years ago, as New Democrats, to get the documents on Oakville—or at the very least responded to what the committee members had asked for—we would not be having this debate today, because the documents would have been provided and we would have been dealing with the fallout from the documents.

I understand, from the government's perspective, that they're not going to like what comes out of this because they essentially made a political decision. Ten days before the election, the Liberal Party of Ontario directed the government of Ontario to essentially make a decision—to make an announcement in the middle of the campaign that, if elected, they would cancel these deals. That's pretty serious stuff because these are public dollars, and we expect governments to be frugal in how they spend those dollars. For the Liberal Party of Ontario to essentially decide the policies of the government of Ontario is a pretty serious thing. So here we are, in this situation where we are dealing with this particular issue.

It is our interest, as New Democrats—and Andrea Horwath has made it very clear that what we're interested in is getting, first of all, the documents, which we've got

part of. The government, it appears, has released some of those documents. It is pretty clear that a lot of those documents are somewhat—or it would appear that there are some documents that are missing. For example, in the documents that we received, we have looked at the documents where it refers to a particular other document that doesn't seem to be contained within what we have been given.

The government says they were going to give us unredacted documents; in other words, documents that don't have black highlighter across all of the lines such as we got the first time that they released the information to the committee. It's pretty clear that those documents are highly redacted. It speaks of particular issues, and when you try to read about what the follow-up on the issue is, all of those sections are redacted.

So there is a question: Has the government actually fulfilled what the committee asked for in the first place? And that was to provide all documents, unredacted, to the committee so that it can deal with what it has—and that will be determined, because obviously there's a lot of documents here that we have to go through in order to make sure that in fact the documents that we suspect are missing are missing. It looks like that's the case right now, and certainly there's a lot of redacted documents. So there is the issue in regard to whether there is in fact a situation where the government has actually given all of the documents. That's number one.

The other thing I want to say, and the reason why this, I think, is so serious: If this had been a project under the old Ontario Hydro, we would have never found ourselves in this position. Number one, Ontario Hydro wouldn't have built a stitch of electricity generation that it didn't need. Ontario Hydro worked on a demand/supply plan, and they essentially only built what had to be done, and governments were pretty good at trying to follow that direction.

I remember being part of a government, in 1990, when there was a whole bunch of power plants, private power deals, that had been approved by the previous Peterson government, that we had actually cancelled because there wasn't a demand. The reason we did that is because, at the time, Ontario Hydro came to the Ministry of Energy and the government said, "We're building all of these private power plants, and we don't have a need. We have 25,000 megawatts that we can generate, we're using about 19,000 megawatts, and we're about to put another five online." So we decided, as a government, in fact, that we would not do an expansion through the private system, that we would cancel as many of those as we could without getting into huge penalties. So some we had to allow to go forward, and for some we were able to negotiate cancellations that were pretty frugal as far as what it cost the taxpayer. But we always understood it's best to do that expansion, when needed, through the public system, at the time called Ontario Hydro.

Let me tell you why it's important that we deal with this matter today. The government has gone down the line that the biggest part of what the government is doing

for new generation is being done by private power deals. They are not subject to the same oversight and clarity and transparency that is available when you do something under OPG, the old Ontario Hydro. When, for example, Ontario Hydro of the day or OPG of the day or Hydro One, if it's a transmission project, takes on the development of a new project, there is policy within Ontario Hydro, or now OPG and Hydro One, to have public consultations so that everything is much more transparent, that you have an ability to ask questions and to scrutinize the project to see, "Does this make sense from an environmental point of view, and does this make sense from a financial point of view?"

When you have a private power deal, it's not the same. The private power deal, by its very nature, is much more secretive. So a lot of what is talked about in regard to the contract that leads to one of these projects being built is essentially contained within the purview of the negotiations and contracts that are signed between the government—through its agent, Ontario Power Generation or OPA—and the actual private power deliverer. That's much the case of what happened this time.

What you've now got is an increasing amount of power being generated in the private sector that is not subject to the same kind of rules when it comes to transparency that you would see if it was a publicly owned operation such as OPG or Hydro One. So if we have more of that going on, we need to make sure—because we do know in the case of this particular Oakville plant and the Mississauga plant, we're now literally having to pay in the hundreds of millions of dollars for decisions that the government made—that we shouldn't be spending money that we can use in health care, education or other projects.

The problem is, there's no scrutiny. So there needs to be a very strong message, Speaker, and I think this speaks to your ruling. Governments today and in the future need to understand that they can't hide behind contracts, a sub judice rule, client-solicitor privileges or whatever to withhold information that the public should know about.

What we really need to do here is to send a very strong message not only to this government for decisions that it may make in the future, but any other government that comes in after: "Don't think that you can go and make one of these deals and never have to worry about releasing the information, because a committee of the Legislature or the House could always ask for those documents to be presented." The fact that you know that that's the case means you might be a little bit more careful next time.

It's like, what is the largest deterrent in preventing crime? It's always the fear of being caught. That's part of what we need to do here: We really need to send a very strong message that you can't think that you can hide—you can make a deal with a private power producer, hide behind sub judice, hide behind solicitor-client privilege, or hide behind a commercial agreement as an excuse for not releasing the information to a committee of the

Legislature or the House in the future. Governments in the future are going to have to know that.

That's why I think it's important, and that's why I agree that even though the government says they released some of the documents, this matter is not dealt with. We need to deal with the actual issue.

Is this about trying to do "gotcha" kind of politics? That's not what we're interested in. That's not what New Democrats want in this. New Democrats, essentially, want two things: that the issue be made public, so the public has a right to know what happened; and number two, that there's a really strong message sent that in the future, this government, or other governments after, can't hide behind that type of sub judice rules or solicitor-client privilege in not releasing documents to this committee about public dollars.

1530

Think about it, Speaker: This government has gone down the road of doing more privatization than even the Conservatives did in the time that they were there. They're now moving down the road of privatizing services under ServiceOntario. There are going to be similar types of agreements that will be made with all kinds of ServiceOntario deliveries, everything from the possible delivery of birth certificates and death certificates to the maintenance of various databases in the province of Ontario. The issuance of various permits and licences is going to be privatized.

First of all, we as New Democrats don't believe that's the way to go. Privatization costs you more money, it's less transparent, and you get worse service. Just look at winter road maintenance as an example of what that is, and these particular power deals that they've negotiated.

But the issue is, there's going to be more in the way of privatization. If the government is negotiating with a private-sector enterprise of some type that they're going to get control over a database—whatever it might be—or the delivery of service under ServiceOntario, they need to understand that all of the documents that are related to the deal can be made public. That is very important because there needs to be a clear understanding that even though the government has said you can't FOI documents under the ServiceOntario provisions, that you can't do FOIs and there isn't the degree of transparency that there would be under a public agency, those private sector contractors and this government need to understand that, yes, all of those documents that you're currently negotiating under the privatization of whatever can be subject to a request by a committee or can be subject to a request by this House to be made public. I think it's a very strong message that we need to send: that you can't just hide behind solicitor-client privilege and private contracts as a way of trying to withhold from the public what naturally is what they should be able to know about.

The other point I just want to make—and this has been said by Andrea Horwath and has been said by others—is these are public dollars. We're sent here, all of us, as honourable members to be the custodians of the public purse and to make sure that the money that we spend here

in the province of Ontario, \$100-billion-plus a year, is spent in a judicious way. I think when the public sees that you're going to spend \$185 million to cancel Mississauga, and the cost on Oakville is climbing—it's \$40 million that the government told us yesterday and \$210 million for a transmission line that's probably not necessary if you hadn't built this thing in the first place or had put it in the right place. The purchase of the generators is another \$200 million. You're up to about \$450 million to \$500 million on Mississauga alone. Cumulatively, you're talking about a \$600-million decision that was made by—the Liberal Party of Ontario got this government to make a decision that cost the taxpayers 600 million bucks.

How do you tell the teenager who's riding back on the Ontario Northland next week during Thanksgiving, which they won't be able to do, that they can't get on a train because the government can't pay \$14 million for a subsidy for the Ontario Northland when you spent \$600 million to essentially save a bunch of seats in Mississauga-Oakville? What do you tell the person who's sitting at home, who's waiting for home care services? Speaker, you get those calls as I do, as all members do. There are people in all of our communities who are needing services when it comes to home care who can't get them. Why? Because we don't have the money to augment the services that the community care access centres provide in our communities. What do you tell those seniors?

I was just talking to Velma on the weekend in regard to her particular case. All she needs is somebody to do the laundry because she has crippling arthritis, and she can't operate the washing machine and do the manipulating of the laundry. Somebody comes in her house in order to do some of her personal care. She's saying, "At one point, I'm not going to be able to live alone. It's going to be long-term-care facility or hospital." What do you tell Velma? "I can spend \$600 million to save a couple of seats in Oakville-Mississauga, but I can't spend a few extra dollars when it comes to health care"? So that's the other thing that drives this whole thing. It's not about politics and the vengeance of the opposition and game-playing that the government tries to make this out to be. Quite frankly, it's about ensuring that we are judicious with the taxpayers' dollars.

The other thing I just want to say is that—and I'm probably not going to take the full amount of time I've got, because I'm pretty well at the end of what I want to say, but I just want to really end on this note: We are all sent here to do the right thing, and I don't believe there's a member that got elected in the last election who genuinely doesn't believe that. Unfortunately, what happens at times is people get caught up in the decisions that are made by their caucuses or by their government or by their party—in this case, the Liberal Party. You would hope at one point that there's a certain amount of independence on the part of members to say, "Hey, this isn't right," and to try to make right what is a wrong decision. And I think that's the unfortunate part of this.

People get disconnected from politics because they see this kind of thing and they say, "Well, all the politicians are the same. They're all doing the same thing." And I just want to say, I don't believe that's the case. I believe there's a lot of people who are trying to do the right thing around here, and I think it's incumbent upon us as members to remember what we're sent here to do, and that is to be as honest as we can with ourselves, with our parties and with the public when it comes to the work that we do in this particular place.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for this time in debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm actually deeply saddened that this Legislature is debating a motion of contempt directed at—this is a serious debate, and I hope it can be not the usual sarcastic interjections. I've been guilty of that myself over the years, and others. But I think this is a significant debate and I hope we can have that exchange. I am saddened that we are debating a motion of contempt, actually for any member of the House, I must say, but particularly the highly respected and distinguished member for London, and a distinguished member of the legal profession.

The opposition, as is its right, demanded to have produced—and the House leader for the NDP made reference to this—the documents related to the relocation of the proposed natural-gas-fired electricity plants, plants that, yes, spokespersons for both of the opposition parties agreed should not be built. So the government has a different responsibility—I recognize that—but there was unanimity at least on that.

There were discussions at House leaders' meetings, not on whether the Speaker's ruling to produce the documents would be sustained, but how to do so and whether commercially sensitive documents vetted by experts in commercial law and by opposition representatives might be delayed until such time as an agreement with the company might be reached. It's a difficult discussion. I've been in opposition. If you're in opposition, you want unfettered release of documents, come heck or high water, and that is your right to demand that.

Government representatives—and I said I wasn't an expert on commercial law, but I said that I thought it might be helpful if a retired judge and representatives of each of the political parties went through to see if there were any documents they felt could be prejudicial to the discussions going on at that time. The opposition made the choice that they did not want to participate in that. I respect that choice. I'm not here to chastise anybody for that. That is your right to do so.

The opposition parties chose, as was their right, to ignore that jeopardy, and we had a good discussion, I think—a fair discussion. I heard their reasons, and that is fine that they had those reasons. I may disagree with them, but that's the nature of this House.

Last Thursday, the questions which were—because I was in opposition as well—written for the Conservative

caucus, a pattern of questions, were there to say to the Minister of Energy in a way—would it be mockingly? I don't know what it was—"Oh, well, we know it's not your fault, but if only you produce these documents this will be solved." And so the documents were produced, as the Speaker insisted in his ruling they'd be and as the government complied with, and yet that wasn't good enough.

Instead, the opposition wanted more. I think, in this case, they wanted to denigrate the reputation of a member of the government, an individual who has served this Legislature extremely well, and a person who is a distinguished member of the legal profession in the province of Ontario, widely respected in that regard.

1540

There are lots of motions that are quite legitimate in the House, but when motions of this kind come forward, which are directed personally at somebody—I call them politically vindictive; that's my view as a government member. Others may have a different view, and I respect that. I think it leads to the breakdown, and perhaps this has been an evolution, of the Legislature and the way that it functions best for all of us. I think reference has been made, by others of all parties, to the fact that the debates seem to be deteriorating. The written notes come in for each one of us from the various political parties, and they take swings back and forth. They're pretty vitriolic. I don't think they are particularly productive, I don't think they're good for the democratic system, and I think I've watched over the years this Legislature deteriorate in that particular way.

I can remember some outstanding speeches by William Davis when he was the Premier, and by Stephen Lewis. I used to actually come to the House, because we didn't have television sets then, and you had to get a squawk box, which was a hearing box; you had to have some kind of position. So when somebody like Stephen Lewis or Jim Renwick was speaking, or Bob Welch, someone of that nature, I'd come into the House—or Bob Nixon on our side—and listen to those speeches. I'd even send them out to my friends in those political parties, saying, "Here's an example of what good debate is in this Legislature." Yes, they were sometimes hard-hitting, as they should be, but I think they represented an era when people were quite respectful of one another.

I think part of the situation we find ourselves in is a result of those of us who are elected members yielding our power to those who are unelected, the backroom wise people of all the political parties who have great advice for us. Now, the great advantage they have, I must say, is that they can make the snowballs but they don't have to throw those snowballs. They don't have to accept the consequences of it. So they eagerly smile and—again, I'm trying to put this out of a partisan context to say that's what happens. Political parties have their people who make these snowballs, and they don't have to accept the consequences. I used to watch some questions when I was opposition House leader that would come that were going to be asked of government members, and I would

be considered to be miserable by some of my members or others who had written questions in saying, "No, that is not acceptable to me. That is a personal attack on the individual. If you have a policy question, I will accept it. Otherwise, I will not accept it." I wasn't always House leader and didn't always have that control, but that was a philosophy that I felt was important to follow.

Having this situation evolve, I fully expected to see, and I do today, that members of the Conservative caucus are going to vote in favour and speak in favour of this. I have no doubt about that. They have made that very clear, and they've been consistent in that approach. What I would be surprised at—and this is perhaps being unfair in one way—is to see the New Democratic Party piling on, as they use the term in football. I think the former government, the Conservative Party, has made a decision on its approach, and we know what that approach is in this Legislature. It's quite legitimate to choose that. I don't agree with it; others might. Some think it's great, the approach that has been taken, particularly when you said that no matter what was in the first budget, you weren't going to support it. You saw the government as not being supportable in any way, and that's fine; I accept that.

The New Democratic Party did choose a different path. Yes, there were clashes in the House from day to day, but they decided not to follow that path. So I ask them, looking at this particular resolution before the House, if they would keep that in mind.

You know, other times there have been situations that have arisen. I remember as a kid watching the Spadina Expressway be cancelled just before the election in 1971. There are people who made charges against Mr. Davis at that time, that this was politically motivated, and polls and so on. I actually thought it was the right decision he made at the time, a good decision, and yes, there might have been a political component in it. It cost millions of dollars to abandon that, but it was the right decision that Mr. Davis had made.

Now, I want to zero in on an interesting exchange in the Legislative Assembly involving Anne Swarbrick and Bob Nixon. It was one of the highlights of this House in my view, and by the way, Ernie Eves is in this as well. Ms. Swarbrick had sent a letter to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario expressing concern about the college's decision to allow a doctor to continue practising medicine despite four convictions of sexual assault. She was writing this letter on behalf of a constituent. She ended her statement in the House the following way: "No matter how strong my feelings, I believe it was inappropriate for me, as a minister of the crown, to attempt to influence a tribunal. Therefore, I have offered my resignation to the Premier." Similarly, Shelley Martel, who was a minister at the same time, followed the same pattern and offered her resignation.

Here's what Bob Nixon had to say, the Leader of the Opposition. This is a chance—this is a notch in the belt in politics, to have a minister resign. He said, "I have a word on the statements by the two honourable members.

I need hardly say there is no political joy in those statements, and I can assure the two honourable members on behalf of my colleagues that their reputation and integrity have in no way suffered by these statements. From my own point of judgment in these matters, I will congratulate both of them on the actions they have taken in the House at this time and leave the responsibility where it properly belongs," with the Premier, to make that decision.

Mr. Eves followed to say, "I too would like to make a very brief comment with respect to the statements made by the two honourable members.

"The member for Scarborough West knows very well what I feel about her integrity as a minister for women's issues. I've expressed that to her on at least two occasions that I can recall. The minister who is the member for Sudbury East will know that I have had a profound admiration for her abilities and integrity in the House for several years now.

"I would like to echo the comments made by the leader of the official opposition that there is indeed no joy in statements such as these made in the Legislature here this afternoon. However, I might add that I think it demonstrates to everybody that there is indeed integrity in the system we all try to serve regardless of which side of the House" they happen to be on. "I think in that respect, at least, I have more confidence than ever in the system we have here in Ontario."

What's interesting is the next question by Mr. Nixon in the House. In fact, the question says that Mr. Rae should not accept the resignation. This is coming from a Leader of the Opposition.

"Mr. Nixon: I'm questioning myself the appropriateness of the question, but I believe the Premier deserves to say something about this matter to the House. I think he understands that the feeling expressed by the two spokespersons over here is sincerely felt. Without getting beyond that feeling, the responsibility rests very largely on the head of the government, not only to respond to the offers made by the two ministers but to accept a certain special responsibility for the fact that, in spite of their strong feeling in this regard in this sickening incident, they did not know better. What has he got to say about that?" The dialogue continues with Mr. Rae.

The upshot of it is that neither minister resigned because of that particular so-called offence on that occasion. That is a situation where a Leader of the Opposition, a partisan person, made a plea to the Premier of a government whose two ministers had offered their resignation not to accept those resignations. There would have been those who would have been advising Mr. Nixon, who may have been annoyed with Mr. Nixon, who might have been advising, "Isn't it much better to have a notch in the belt—two ministers, in this case, resigning?"

But I think that is a demonstration of an approach which more and more we have to get back to in this House. When I see motions of this kind that come forward, I am very worried. I see other motions that I think

are quite legitimate, and the debate is going to be profound in this House on many occasions. It's going to be vigorous. But when I see these kinds of motions, which are so very hard on the person, for instance, a motion of contempt—I think the members of the Conservative caucus, when they asked their questions last week, in fact, pointed out to Minister Bentley what the consequences of a contempt motion would be to his political career, to his legal profession career and so on. That is why I worry about these.

I think of a lot of people, and when you've been here, I understand, for a number of years, you have a window on the past. You don't want to stay there but you have a window on the past. I have a great deal of respect for people like Roy McMurtry, Dr. Bob Elgie, Tom Wells, Bob Welch, Keith Norton, Susan Fish and former Premier Davis himself. Mr. Kennedy was a representative here and is ably represented now by Mr. Chudleigh. Mr. Kennedy who was here was a man of great integrity. And I remember, as I say, very good members of the New Democratic Party. Neither were part of my party, but I think there was a level of collegiality in those days, a level of respect for one another, a genuine desire not to get down and be firing grenades back and forth.

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I look at the United States in two respects. I bring it in the context of this motion. First of all is the absolutely negative advertising we see going on, and it has permeated us, and we all do it. It happens. It happens for all political parties in elections, and I understand that. I lament that, but it does happen. Each of the political parties has participated in that.

I must say that, in my own riding, my personal policy is not to attack my opponents in any way, and they're quite respectful of that. I think that has worked very well in our constituencies. A long list of the friends that I've accumulated over the years are former Conservative candidates that I've run against over the years who, to this day, are strong personal friends, and New Democratic and other parties who I've competed against. I think we have to remember that very much when we get into these kinds of situations where we are bringing forward motions of this kind.

I look at the career of the Minister of Energy. I consider him to be a man of great integrity, not only in this House but in his personal life and in his legal profession. He served as the Attorney General of this province for four years. He has been a well-respected and honourable member of this Legislature for nine years. Before he came to this place, he was a member of the Ontario bar, the legal profession, of the highest standing and reputation over the past quarter century. He opened community law clinics and taught law classes in his spare time. I've watched him in debate, in caucus and in cabinet, and he's very measured in his arguments that he puts forward. I don't always agree: By nature, in caucus, we have our disagreements, and in cabinet we will have our disagreements from time to time.

I look and see that we have a motion that is, in effect, going to be very damaging to him if it were to pass in this

House, and I find that regretful. I also must say that I've observed things that have happened in the past that I haven't agreed with that have caused great angst and consequence for members of each of the political parties in this House.

My friend Bob Runciman once had his resignation submitted, and I must say I regretted that. I know he got a call from David Peterson, for instance, and David Peterson said on that occasion, "Bob, I don't think you should have had to resign." In these situations, we're quick—I can't recall, and someone may correct me by looking at a Hansard, but I can't recall myself ever calling for a resignation of a member of the Ontario Legislature in my 35 years in this Legislature. I have never called for a minister's resignation in this House.

I think things can deteriorate in this House considerably. I think this slope we're going down is not a good slope. I think we have to elevate the level of debate. I think we have to restore the collegiality which was there in previous—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just a moment. Order.

You may continue.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I wanted to mention as well a person who, again, I've learned a lot from over the years, and I still go whenever he speaks to hear him speak. That is Mr. Davis, the former Premier of this province, who has clearly had a profound effect. Many, when they were guessing who the best Premier might have been, would have said William Davis. That was agreed to be Mr. Lougheed, but I beg to differ. I remember very well what he provided for us. Mr. Davis was a person who said, in so many words, that—I'm looking for someone such as Bill Davis who would—and he's loyal to the party. I read his column on Peter Lougheed, and I must say I thought it was an excellent column. He has always been loyal to his party. I think when he speaks, he speaks to the system.

I had a quote in here from Mr. Davis that said, "We confronted each other. I've confronted the Bob Raes, the Bob Nixons and the Stephen Lewises in this House. But often, after heated confrontations, deep disagreements on policy, we broke bread together."

I think a motion of this kind is not helpful to this Legislature and leads us down a path that we will be very sorry about, and we're already seeing part of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: Last night I had the opportunity to help our PC team go over the 36,000-plus pages of documents that we in fact received yesterday afternoon, and I'd like to thank them for their hard work in doing so.

What struck me was how many pages were either missing, redacted or whited out. So far, we've found hundreds of examples of entire passages in letters and emails that have been blanked out, referenced attachments that have been omitted and correspondence that has clearly been withheld. So I'm not sure how the gov-

ernment House leader, who I wish was here to hear this, has the audacity to tell Ontarians that nothing has been suppressed when it's so blatantly obvious that crucial correspondence wasn't released. In fact, just this morning, the member for Kitchener Centre said, "There was absolutely nothing redacted. Every single document has been provided." I'd never like to call the member, obviously, a liar, but I don't believe a word—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd have to ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdrawn.

I know we've had a bit of a history lesson earlier, and I think it's important just to read into the record the reference of the Oxford Dictionary in terms of the definition of "all," and that is "the whole quantity or extent of"; "any whatever: he denied all knowledge"; "the greatest possible"; "pronoun, everything or everyone"—as well as the Oxford Dictionary's definition of "disclosure," which I'll read: "The act or process of making known something that was previously unknown; a revelation of facts; a lawyer's disclosure of a conflict.... a complete revelation of all material facts"—just for the government's record.

For starters, we haven't found a single email from the former Minister of Energy and the current one at all. I find it a little strange that the Minister of Energy doesn't communicate with his staff by email. I understand that he's a busy guy and he can't seriously deal with everything on the phone or in person. So how was the minister communicating with his staff? Was he writing notes? Was he using Morse code? Was he using pigeon carriers?

I hope you can see where I'm going with this, Madam Speaker. Clearly, the Minister of Energy had to have sent at least one email to a staff member to discuss the cancellation of these gas plants. I know, of course, he's also a proud user of Research in Motion's BlackBerry, so I do know he has a device.

Given that we don't have any of these emails from the former or current energy ministers, I think it's more than clear that the government has again suppressed critical information detailing the costs and motive behind cancelling these gas plants. One would have thought, when a Speaker ruled that the Minister of Energy had breached the privileges of a member in this House by withholding the power plant documents, that the Liberals would have complied with the estimates committee's motion to help the energy minister avoid being found in contempt of Parliament.

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Instead, sadly, the Premier and the Liberal campaign team, including his friends, withheld hundreds of pages of documents and hung the Minister of Energy out to dry. Again, it looks like the Premier, as well as the Liberal campaign team, is still willing to sacrifice the energy minister's hopes and dreams of running for the leadership of the Liberal Party just to keep Ontarians in the dark as to what really happened in Mississauga and Oakville.

For the sake of the public interest, I'd like to go over some of what we do know about the costs of the Liberals' seat-saver program.

We know now that the combined cost for both cancellations has risen to a staggering \$640 million. That's \$190 million for cancelling the Mississauga gas plant, a \$40-million payment for unrecoverable costs, a \$210-million payment to purchase TransCanada's gas turbines for the Oakville cancellation, and another \$200 million in transmission infrastructure upgrades to meet energy demand in Oakville, since the gas plant has been removed from the southwest GTA. Given the sheer size of the waste, and the gravity of the situation, here in the Legislature the minister must be held responsible.

The Liberal government has wasted well over half a billion dollars of taxpayers' money. Despite an order from the estimates committee for the release of the power plant documents, the energy minister thumbed his nose at Ontarians and this House.

The privileges of members of this House are not something to be taken lightly. They are an integral part of our representative democracy and serve Ontarians well by allowing opposition members to do their job and hold the government to account. But once these checks on government power are taken away, governments become more disconnected from the public and betray the public good for their own partisan political interests.

We, as members of the opposition, must take a stand to protect these rules of the House, to ensure that future Ontarians enjoy the freedoms we have fought so hard to have. We can't let the Liberal government trample on this institution and the democratic ideals we hold as a society. That's why we now must reconstitute the finance and economic affairs committee: so members can not only investigate the gravity of the minister's and the Liberal government's contemptuous behaviour but also determine the full costs for Ontario taxpayers of the Liberal seat-saver efforts in Oakville and in Mississauga.

As a member of the estimates committee, I can say that I couldn't believe the number of political tricks the energy minister pulled to prevent the release of power plant documents. After the initial motion for the release of the power plant documents was moved and passed on May 16, the minister and the OPA both sent letters to the committee dismissing the right of the committee to request these documents. When opposition members again requested the documents, the Liberals pulled every trick in the book to stall the debate. They continued to move frivolous amendments until the energy minister chose to release a small portion of the documents relating to the Mississauga power plant.

Despite the right of committee members "to send for persons, papers and things" under standing order 110(b), the energy minister refused to be fully transparent with the committee. That's why, to get the requested documents, the member from Cambridge had to table a point of privilege in this House. Even after that, the Liberal government chose to withhold critical information that would help opposition members get to the bottom of this mess. That's why we're calling for the committee to be reconstituted right away. We, as members of the opposition, have a job to do, but if we don't have the full story,

we can't do that job for our constituents who sent us here to represent their best interests.

There are some revelations in the documents we did receive that I'd like to go over, to further demonstrate to members why we need further investigation of this matter in committee.

Speaker, I'd like to touch on some of the documents I had a chance to go over last night. Firstly, I want to go over an email from Assistant Deputy Minister Rick Jennings, talking about how to spin the Liberals' cancellation of the Mississauga gas plant. We've all heard the energy minister say that the \$190 million that the government wasted on cancelling the plant was for its "relocation," but on October 20 last year, Mr. Jennings said that the interpretation of events was "problematic on several grounds." Here's what he had to say: "Relocate is not the right word in any event as it implies that the plant (which has foundation poured and appears to be at least one third built ...) will be moved to a new location. In fact, the plant will not, of course, be relocated."

I just want to pause on that for a moment and remind members that this is coming from an ADM in the Ministry of Energy. Obviously, his assessment in this email with the government's legal team is much more revealing than the Liberals' "relocation" spin.

Let's finish this quote. Jennings goes on to say that "the existing development would be abandoned and perhaps later demolished and possibly the developer would be awarded a contract to build a new plant at an alternative site."

On October 21, Mr. Jennings again advised the government not to use the term "relocate" since it didn't accurately reflect what the government was actually doing by cancelling the gas plant. He said that "the existing construction would be demolished, not 'relocated.'"

We know that that's exactly what happened. It's time for them to tell the truth.

The Liberals made a last-minute campaign decision on September 24 last year to save Liberal seats when they were down in the polls without even thinking at all about the consequences of their actions. In fact, I want to read a quote into the record explaining exactly what happened: "This was a campaign undertaking—at a time when I think we were still behind in the polls, so it required a government decision which occurred after the election." Speaker, do you want to know who said that? It was the finance minister in committee who said that. Here we have a direct admission that the Liberals cancelled the Mississauga power plant strictly to save Liberal seats in the GTA.

I'll pull one of my favourites. I'm actually holding a PowerPoint presentation given to cabinet to discuss what options the government had to deal with the Liberal Party's spur-of-the-moment campaign decision on September 24, 2011. Of course, the Liberals knew there would be hefty costs for Liberal seat-saver efforts, but they conducted no cost-benefit analysis of the decision to cancel the Mississauga power plant. Let's be honest: We all know the Liberals like to spend first and ask questions after.

What I find interesting in this presentation, though, is that cabinet actually considered building the power plant and then paying the operators not to run it. The presentation states, "OPA obligations to make monthly payments are low, based on [the] outcome of [the] 2005 RFP process, and paying [the] plant not to operate over 20 years may be cheaper than paying for sunk costs, remediation of the site and potentially some lost profits."

Unbelievable. After reading that, one has to think that the \$190-million figure is likely not the whole story. How much does building a power plant and then paying not to run it for 20 years actually cost? How much are the sunk costs? What are the remediation costs? I find it hard to believe that all costs associated with the cancellation of the Mississauga gas plant have, in fact, been factored in.

Let's not forget that the energy minister tried to say that cancelling the Oakville power plant would only cost \$40 million yesterday. That claim was soon debunked. We now know that that figure has ballooned into \$450 million and, for the cancellation of a \$1.2-billion gas plant, I suspect that that figure will continue, in fact, to grow.

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Folks, let's move on to Oakville. Without any forethought, the Liberals rushed to cancel the Oakville power plant without even considering how to meet the energy demands in the southwest GTA. Now we've learned that within the next few years the transmission infrastructure in Oakville will have to be upgraded, at a cost of \$200 million, to meet the community's energy needs.

When the Liberals announced that they were cancelling the Oakville power plant, they told the public that energy demand had actually dropped and as a result the power plant was no longer needed. But that's not what OPA spokesman Ben Chin said the day after the cancellation. In fact, he told the CBC that the "power demand situation [in Oakville] has not changed." He then went on to say that Oakville is a growing area that is "still using more electricity per capita than most places in the province." I guess that's why the OPA's vice-president of communications, Kristin Jenkins, asked in an email on November 24, 2011, why the independent electricity operator got to be so forthright when the agency explained that there was still a need for energy in the southwest GTA.

At first blush, it would at least seem as though the OPA and the Liberal government initially didn't have their story straight. Who could blame them when only a select few insiders knew that the Liberals were preparing to cancel the plant? In fact, OPA director of contract management Michael Killeavy told a colleague in an email the day after the Liberals cancelled the plant that he was sorry he didn't inform her about the Liberals' plans. He then states he was "told not to tell anyone."

This confusion can also explain why the Liberal government had to work hard to get all OPA officials to fall into line on how to message the seat-saver decision. As I've pointed out earlier, OPA officials didn't agree

with the government's talking points on demand, but they also didn't agree with the Liberals' messaging on transmission infrastructure. In fact, OPA CEO Colin Andersen said just seven months ago, before the Oakville power plant was cancelled, "It would not be responsible to build a plant elsewhere and deliver its power to the southwest GTA because that would require building new high-voltage transmission lines, which would impact many other communities and mean hundreds of millions of dollars in additional costs that would have to [be] borne by the ratepayers of Ontario." Again, that is what OPA CEO Colin Andersen said.

I encourage you all, if you've not had an opportunity to see the piles and piles of documents, to have a quick look at these—great weekend reading material.

Clearly the CEO knew then that the transmission lines would be an additional cost to taxpayers, despite the spin the Liberals put out yesterday. According to the OPA, this significant transmission work needs to be completed by 2017-18. So, as I already explained before, that pegs the Oakville cancellation at \$450 million. How much more will it cost?

I find it troubling that the Liberals think they can release some documents without any email communications from the Minister of Energy or the current Minister of Energy, and we still haven't seen any communications between the Liberal campaign team and the Minister of Energy. As I've said in estimates committee, I find it shocking to think that a government will allow political strategists and campaigners like Don Guy to write energy policy on the fly in the final days of a campaign just to save a few lousy Liberal seats.

The Premier repeatedly said, while these power plants were being developed, that he wouldn't tolerate NIMBYism. Then, when the Liberals were down in the polls, as I had mentioned previously with what the finance minister said in committee, the Liberals suddenly heard the voice of the residents, who were always opposed to locating these plants in their neighbourhoods. They wouldn't have located the plants there, and neither would we. We knew Mississauga was a bad location, but the Liberals chose to go ahead anyway. Given the Liberals' lack of foresight and their desperate attempts to withhold documents that would paint a clearer picture of what really happened in Oakville and Mississauga, we must reconstitute the finance committee right away and get to the bottom of this issue.

I'd like to congratulate my colleague the member from Cambridge for putting forward this motion, the work of the members of the official opposition and other opposition members, and the work on estimates.

This issue will not go away. It's one that we as the official opposition need to hold the government to account on. Taxpayers are asking us at home in our constituencies to stand up and fight this waste that they've seen this government time and time again continue to do, the hundreds of millions of dollars that were wasted—wasted. We can all imagine what we would have done with that to protect our core social programs here in the province:

our health care, education. They simply used it for their own political purposes and self-interest.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not going to say I'm pleased to be able to join this debate, because I think it's one that devalues this place. I just want to reinforce what the Minister of the Environment said. I think what he did was he sounded a cautionary note in terms of the tone of this place and warned us about allowing the debate and the tone to devolve into one that is baser and more vicious than we would want it to be. I really take that to heart.

The government House leader this morning outlined the process that brought us here. I want to keep my comments in that context, because I think it's important to remember how we got here. He outlined the process. He made it clear that this is a relatively straightforward situation, and I think that we need to remember that.

Between May 9 and May 12, the Minister of Energy appeared before the Standing Committee on Estimates in order to answer questions about the 2012-13 estimates of the Ministry of Energy. While the minister answered questions that related to a number of issues, the committee members from the official opposition spent a lot of time asking the minister questions relating to the two gas plants that were to have been built, both in Oakville and in Mississauga.

While he was before the committee, the Minister of Energy was placed in a very difficult situation because of those questions. He was repeatedly asked questions relating to those two facilities, and the overwhelming majority of the questions related specifically to the ongoing outstanding legal proceedings and confidential negotiations. I think that's an important piece to remember: He was being asked questions that were sensitive, that were confidential and that he was not at liberty to elucidate on.

What the Minister of Energy tried to do was to strike an effective balance between the committee's authority to ask those questions and to request those documents, and the need to protect the public interest in the midst of those highly sensitive commercial negotiations and litigation. He has a responsibility—he had a responsibility, and he has a responsibility as the minister of the crown. It's different than the responsibilities that other members have. He was taking those responsibilities very seriously.

The Chair of the committee, the member for Beaches–East York, was very aware of those responsibilities. In fact, he repeatedly ruled that the committee members were permitted to ask such questions but that the minister was able to exercise his discretion and to respond to such questions in a manner that protected the interests of the province. I think that was as it should have been.

Just to exemplify that, on May 16, Mr. Prue said, “The minister has the right to decline either giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during his answering of the questions.” On the same day, May

16, Mr. Prue said, “I would advise that I'm going to allow the motion to proceed, but I would also advise—and I think the minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and I would expect him to do so. That would be my ruling.”

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The reason that it's important that we raise these facts and those statements repeatedly is that I think it's important for everyone to understand that the rules were being followed, that the Minister of Energy was being very careful to protect the public interest. There were sensitive negotiations going on. The Chair of the committee was making his ruling. He is a seasoned member of the Legislature as well, and he knew what his responsibility was.

What happened was that then the official opposition and the third party attempted to begin to vilify the Minister of Energy. The notion that somehow something was being hidden or concealed entered the rhetoric. That's simply not true. I think that it's important that we deal with the facts. The record shows that the Minister of Energy was trying at all times, as I say, to balance those competing interests. He was trying to balance the right of the committee to ask those questions with the public interest of making sure that what needed to be confidential remained confidential.

So if we fast-forward to the Speaker's ruling of September 13, 2012, the recent ruling, the Speaker ruled that, while a *prima facie* breach of privilege had been established, he would set aside the matter and ask the three House leaders to go away, to “take it upon themselves to find a path that can satisfy the request of the estimates committee,” and that is what they undertook to do. They undertook to go away and to come up with a resolution to this issue of the release or not of the documents. And in this matter, the Speaker exercised his discretion. He followed the novel approach that was adopted by Speaker Milliken, as the government House leader has said. That approach was adopted by Speaker Milliken in the Afghan detainee matter by setting aside his ruling in order to allow the House leaders to devise a means whereby both their concerns were met. So he allowed for that process, and I think that in doing that he was putting in place a very rational initiative that would allow for a resolution in a civilized way.

The approach that the Speaker took, I think, was taken for a couple of reasons. The Speaker recognized, I believe, that there were competing public interests at play—the interests of the committee, as I've said, in exercising its parliamentary privileges, and the interests of the Minister of Energy in temporarily refraining from the disclosure of sensitive information in the midst of commercial negotiations and related proceedings. So I think that the Speaker also recognized that it was very important that those competing interests be acknowledged and that they be part of the context of this decision-making.

I think the ruling clearly laid out that this was a unique situation. This wasn't something that we come across

every day; it was something that needed special treatment and needed to be treated in a considered way, and that is what he did.

So if that's what happened, then the next step was that the House leaders would go away and that they would come back with their decision. Yesterday, shortly after announcing the settlement of the Oakville matter, the Minister of Energy, as we all know, and the Ontario Power Authority released 36,000 records that were responsive to the original motion of the estimates committee.

I know there has been a lot of debate about whether the 36,000 documents are all of the documents. I think the fact, as the government House leader said, that there are two letters of attestation, from Colin Andersen and from the Minister of Energy, should stand as making it clear that all of the documents that have been released are the documents that were available and are the ones that were asked for.

The government went so far as to provide the document in electronic form and to give a USB key to each one of the opposition parties, in addition to the Clerk, and to our mind, that should have meant that the request had been satisfied and that the matter should have been closed. But here we are, standing today and having another conversation.

To my mind, we're dealing with a situation of manufactured discontent; that the opposition is deciding to create and fabricate—

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, actually, I'm describing what I see, which is a situation where all of the steps—

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Kathleen, actually, is the name.

It seems to me that all of the steps that were asked, all of the requests that were made of the House leaders have been complied with. The ruling of the Speaker has been complied with, and the documents have been released. And yet there seems to be a desire to create this very negative debate that really is an assault on personalities more than it is a discussion of policy.

It was interesting to me: The member for Cambridge, I think, this morning talked about how there was not a political motivation to this. I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that there's nothing but a political motivation behind this; that this is all about a political motivation coming from the other side. So—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that they're not going to be happy about me saying that, but that is what I see, Madam Speaker.

Again, I go back to the Minister of the Environment and his cautionary note about the kinds of debates we bring to this House, the kinds of questions we ask of each other, the way we treat each other, and what the impact of that is on parliamentary proceedings.

I am very aware—and I will come back to this at the end—of the pages sitting in this House. I'm very aware

of the young people who will be watching this debate. I'm very aware of the—not necessarily young people, but the many people of Ontario who are watching this debate. There must be questions in their minds about the business of their government, and what exactly it is that we are going to be able to accomplish here, because I know that many of them know that the Minister of Energy is a man of integrity. They know him. They have seen him operate. They have seen him as the Attorney General of this province for four years. They know that he's a well-respected member of the Legislature and a well-respected member of the bar. They know that he has practised law and that he has a very fine reputation in the province. So the fact that his personal integrity has been questioned I think again points to a certain devolution of the debate in this House. I think that all of that is important as we undertake to haul ourselves up and make sure that we are dealing with the business of the people of the province.

To my mind, this is a disrespectful gambit that the opposition is leading. I think that it's not helpful, and the tone of the debate has not been helpful.

I believe that our government has demonstrated that we are determined to work for the public good, Madam Speaker. Our Minister of Energy weighed the competing interests of the committee. The Speaker ruled on a motion and asked that the leaders come to a resolution. That happened. The documents have been released, the 36,000 pages. The Minister of Energy and the head of the OPA have written letters of attestation. All of that has happened, and then still the desire is to paint our behaviour negatively.

I wanted to draw the Legislature's attention to an opinion piece that was printed today in the Toronto Star. I'm going to read parts of it, and then I will just comment on those. It was authored by the Premier, so the byline is "Dalton McGuinty." The headline is, "Didn't Get It Right on Gas Plants, Premier Says." The context in which I'm reading this is that it's extremely important for governments, of whatever stripe, to take responsibility for their actions, and that is in fact what the Premier says in this article. He begins by talking about our record on energy. He says:

"This week, our government announced we are relocating a gas plant from Oakville to eastern Ontario. The total cost of the relocation is \$40 million. This follows another settlement to move a natural gas plant from Mississauga to Sarnia. The cost of that relocation was \$190 million.

"We believe in accountability to those we serve and we take full responsibility for decisions we make. Here's why we made the decision to relocate these two gas plants."

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Then the Premier goes on to talk about some of the things that we have attempted to do. Again, this is critical, because this whole discussion about energy is in the context of our policies to move to a greener supply of energy in the province. Again, Madam Speaker, I wouldn't expect necessarily the party opposite to agree

with this. I would expect the NDP, the third party, to be supportive of moving to a greener energy supply; I wouldn't expect the opposition to be.

But here's what we have done, and I go back to the article: "Since 2003, we've rebuilt our electricity system. We've added 10,000 megawatts of new, clean generation, including six new gas plants, and 5,000 kilometres of transmission lines"—transmission lines, by the way, that were in sad disarray, that needed a huge amount of work and investment, investment that had not been made over the term of the previous government, and when we came to office it was imperative that we move on that, so the Premier, in his article, talks about that.

"That represents almost \$30 billion"—he goes on to say—"in investments from the public and private sectors and is creating tens of thousands of jobs.

"We made a commitment to Ontarians to close coal-fired generation, a North American first. Burning coal is a leading cause of smog. It contributes to climate change. Particulate matter from coal can penetrate deep into the lungs and it can cause premature death.

"Since 2003, coal generation is down 90%, with a corresponding 93% decrease in harmful sulphur emissions."

Just as the starting point of the Premier's article—the motivation for what we have done over the past nine years is that we needed a cleaner, greener and stronger infrastructure for our energy supply in the province. If we are to continue to be a strong economic driver for the country, which we still are, we need to continue to do that. We have to have our energy supply in good shape.

He went on to say, "As we moved away from coal and renewed the system, we had to make sure our homes and businesses would have the energy they need. Demand is especially high in the GTA—so we planned these natural gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga."

He goes on to say, "Locating new energy plants and predicting our long-term energy needs are never easy things to do. We take responsibility for not getting this right the first time. And we're currently developing better guidelines on choosing sites."

That speaks to two things. It speaks to taking responsibility for having made a decision that probably wasn't the right decision. It also speaks to learning from that and putting in place a better system going forward, and that is as it should be.

I can't imagine an Ontarian—and I have a huge respect for the people of Ontario. I think, as politicians, we often underestimate them, and I've said that before in this House. But I cannot imagine an Ontarian who would want to have a government in place that would not be able to say, "We made this decision. It was not the right decision. We've listened to the community; we've listened to the experts. It was not the right decision, so we are going to correct that." I think to do otherwise, to make a decision that you then realize is not the right decision and to just bully through and say, "Well, no matter what we know now, we are not going to go back and we're not going to change our minds," would be

irresponsible. I think that the cries from the other side to do just that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that to heckle, you need to be in your seat, and when I'm standing, you're quiet.

You may continue.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite says there are other unpopular decisions, and that's very true. In government, what you have to do is weigh priorities—absolutely. We are saying we made a decision around these gas plants that, in retrospect, we would not make today, so we take responsibility for that.

The Premier goes on to write: "It is worth noting that both opposition parties promised to cancel the Mississauga plant. They agreed with our decision. They understood there would be a cost to this." So we are dealing with the situation.

I haven't served in opposition, but I can tell you, Madam Speaker, I spent a lot of time in those gallery seats. I watched. I spent a lot of time watching the Liberals in opposition, dealing with the Conservatives in office. I understand the role of the opposition. I understand that the role of the opposition is to hold government's feet to the fire. But I also understand that it is the role of the opposition to engage in meaningful policy debate. It is not, I believe, the role of the opposition to engage in individual character assassination or in attacks on individuals who are above reproach in terms of their integrity, and I think that that's what we're dealing with.

Again, I'm going to come back to the pages, because it's hard for me not to look at their faces while we're having these debates in this House. I'm saying to the pages and to the children of the province: There is no human endeavour that does not involve successes and mistakes, does not involve success and misstep. There's no shame in making a mistake. In fact, I would argue that there's shame in not taking initiative in order to avoid mistakes—but there is no shame in making a mistake. There is shame in not taking responsibility.

We've taken responsibility, we've complied with the Speaker's ruling, and I think that what we're engaged in now is a very political and, I believe, as the Minister of the Environment said, a dangerous debate in terms of the future of the parliamentary tone in this House. I hope that we can find a way through this, because otherwise I think we're on a slippery slope, and I hold the party opposite responsible.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I find it somewhat unfortunate that there really aren't more members from the government present to actually engage in this very serious motion of contempt. There's under 20% here, and to me, that's inexcusable.

I rise today with feelings of sadness, sadness because I rise during a time when a minister of this government has

been charged with contempt of Parliament. This is perhaps the very first time ever that a minister of an Ontario government has been found to be in contempt of Parliament. This is a sad day indeed for all of Ontario. It's a sad day when a minister and a Premier so utterly violate the trust that the people of this great province have so graciously given them.

Speaker, you've heard me say many times in this Legislature that when you mess up, you fess up. The Minister of Energy was given ample opportunity to in fact fess up, but he, sadly, has refused to act in accordance with the initial requests of the estimates committee, of which I am a committee member, and then with your wishes as well.

Speaker, the minister has been charged with contempt of this Parliament. You ruled that the minister violated the privilege of another member. This isn't about the privilege of a member; it's about the right, one of those most fundamental rights in a democracy, of the public to know whether their government is misusing their hard-earned money, whether or not their government is telling them the truth and whether or not their government is conducting backroom deals in the shadows.

All this side of the House asked for was an answer to those simple questions, and all this government gave us was a litany of excuses on why they were unwilling to provide us with the truth. After months of foot-dragging, the documents have been released, but six months of covering up the truth from the people is simply unacceptable.

Were they simply buying more time for more secretive deals? Only those who have something to hide are afraid of public scrutiny. Those fearful of what the truth will bring to light hide behind empty technicalities. Why did this Premier not release all documents related to the cancelled power plants immediately upon request? Whether it's Ornge or eHealth or cancelled power plants or MPAC, it seems that there is an unending stream of mismanagement and deceit coming from this Liberal government. Scandal—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to withdraw that.

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Interjection: Say, "I withdraw."

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I withdraw. What did I say?

Interjection: "Deceit."

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Oh. I withdraw.

Scandal after scandal: The people of Ontario are wondering when the madness will stop. I hope soon, for the sake of all of us. The Liberals have run out of excuses, and they have run out of time. No pun intended, Speaker, but they've also run out of gas.

This government cancelled two power plants for the sake of saving four seats and hid the true costs from the public. Then they stonewalled for six months, refusing to provide the documents they were ordered to hand over. Having no ideas to run on and facing defeat, this Premier and his Liberal government did what they do best:

needlessly spend taxpayers' money for the sole purpose of politics.

So far, we know that the taxpayer has been hit with a \$190-million price tag for this political stunt. The fact that the Liberals refused for so long to provide us with all documents pertaining to this backroom deal proves that their assault on the Ontario taxpayer is, in all likelihood, much, much higher. Some published accounts have put the cost closer to \$650 million for the cancellation of the plants.

Speaker, this is unacceptable. At a time when this province is at the brink of bankruptcy, running towards a \$411-billion debt and with 600,000 Ontarians out on the streets, unable to find a job, this Liberal government bungles hundreds of millions, if not billions, of taxpayers' dollars to save a handful of parliamentary seats.

This record of secrecy is part and parcel of this government. Just last week, the Ontario Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller, issued a report entitled *Losing Touch*. In it, the commissioner condemns this government for its constant hiding of information from public scrutiny and its record of secrecy. Allow me to quote from the report: "[V]arious ministries persist in hiding environmentally significant decisions from public scrutiny..." Speaker, when a non-partisan officer of the government comes out with findings like this, you know there is an issue. This goes beyond the question of which political party one belongs to; this is about being accountable and honest with the voters of Ontario.

I'm a member of the Standing Committee on Estimates. For the past few months, this committee brought to light this Liberal scandal, and it was this committee that discovered that the Minister of Energy learned about the power plant cancellation from reading the newspapers, not from his own Premier or caucus. We also learned that this was an entirely political decision, meant to save parliamentary seats for the Liberals. Even if this decision by the Liberals didn't cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and even if this Liberal government were not in contempt of Parliament, the utter incompetence of this government disqualifies them from governing Ontario.

Unfortunately for us all, this goes beyond mere incompetence. As a member of the Standing Committee on Estimates, I heard countless hours of deflections and excuses about why this government didn't want to give this House and the public the truth about the power plants. But the minister, who is a lawyer and a former Attorney General, must know the consequences of being found in contempt. The minister is surely aware of the political and legal ramifications to his career that he's threatened with for concealing the truth from this House and the public for so long.

Allow me to revisit some of the things that the minister told the committee on estimates. According to Hansard, on June 5, 2012, the Minister of Energy admitted to failing to engage in community consultations before actually placing the Mississauga power plant in the first place. Only when that decision became a political

liability did this government cancel the plant, and at an extreme cost to the taxpayers.

Speaker, perhaps if this Liberal government actually listened to the people of this province, we wouldn't be in this utter train wreck, as we are now.

They would claim that we agreed to have it there—not true. We said we would never put it there in the first place. This government ignored the voices of middle-class, hard-working Ontarians for the past nine years. This latest disaster is simply another result of that deafness.

During that same day of testimony to the committee on estimates, this minister, when faced with a question that I posed to him, gave us more deflection and excuses and not a single answer. Speaker, we know for a fact that EIG Management, a US hedge fund, sued the province for \$300 million over the Mississauga plant. The OPA offered to settle the lawsuit for \$82.3 million. My question posed to him then and repeated again was, “Minister, where will that \$82.3 million come from?”

Millions of public dollars are being used to settle lawsuits, and the taxpayer has every right to know who is on the hook for that \$82.3 million. Perhaps if this minister had actually provided this House with all documents relating to the cancelled power plants when we asked for them months ago, we would know where this \$82.3 million came from. My bet is that this \$82.3 million isn't included in what the Minister of Finance claims to be \$190 million in “relocation costs.”

The following week, the Minister of Finance testified to the committee of estimates. He told the committee that the Minister of Energy was completely wrong. He said it wasn't a political decision. The Minister of Finance gave diametrically opposing testimony that contradicted his colleague, the Minister of Energy. He completely threw the Minister of Energy under the bus, just as this Premier threw the minister under the bus and forced him to take the fall. Why don't they throw the now Minister of Economic Development and Innovation under the bus too? After all, he signed the agreements, including the \$6-billion Samsung deal, which isn't any part of this act of contempt, but I'm throwing it in anyways.

Oh, I'm furious, Speaker, furious on behalf of the Ontario taxpayer, and furious on behalf of my PC caucus as well. The burning question, of course, is when and why did the cancellation decision come about? We know that it was the current Minister of Energy's predecessor who, appearing with the member from Oakville, made the stunning announcement that the plant in Oakville would be cancelled. Speaker, that was back in 2010. That surprise announcement by the former Minister of Energy from Scarborough Centre was made solely to save Liberal seats in and around Oakville and Mississauga.

Who was involved in the decision to cancel the power plants? Did the Premier make the final decision, or did someone on his campaign team make it? Speaker, the people deserve to know the answers to these questions.

One of the most fundamental bedrocks of a democratic society is a transparent and accountable government.

When a government hides information and ignores the public's right to know how their hard-earned money is being spent, it constitutes a total assault on democracy. The Liberal government has breached the public trust time and time again. Every week, it seems there's another scandal, another case of mismanagement, another record-setting report of unemployment or of the deficit. This list of failure, incompetence and scandal is seemingly unending. If only this scandal was the only one under this Liberal government, but for almost a decade, the Liberals have been involved with one scandal after the next.

Only the PC Party have a plan to put Ontario back on the road to prosperity. Only the PCs have a plan to reduce the size of government—

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Oh, I'm sure—you finally woke up; I'm glad to hear that.

We have a plan to reduce the size of government and to get the people back to work and, most importantly, only the PCs can restore the lost trust the people of Ontario have in government after almost a decade of abysmal failure, debt and scandal. It's time for change.

1650

This goes beyond mere partisanship and politics. Ontario is in serious trouble, and under this Liberal government, that trouble is only getting more severe. People are hurting in Ontario right now—the young, the families, seniors, students, you name it. People are hurting, and they'll admit to it as well. Six hundred thousand Ontarians are unable to find work, the debt is exploding day by day, and we are spiraling towards bankruptcy. The old saying “It's better to ask for forgiveness than get permission” doesn't apply here. What this government has done is unforgivable and justice must prevail, trust must be restored and accountability must take precedence.

Again, Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Minister of Energy did not comply with the wishes of the estimates committee and produce the requested documents. It's unfortunate that a motion of contempt had to be introduced, but the minister knew the rules and the repercussions of his inactions. Once again, Ontario taxpayers are on the hook for the bill. Imagine how many MRIs, hip and knee surgeries, additional health care to those in need—and the list is endless—could have been provided if this government had shown true responsibility and accountability to all of Ontario.

We're not happy about this entire situation at all. However, we are elected representatives of the people from our ridings. The people from Ontario require and request and insist that they have proper representation in this House. We would be doing a total injustice to the people of Ontario had we not acted properly and presented this motion of contempt, simply because of a refusal to co-operate with the estimates committee.

It's a sad day when, in fact, individuals are being forced to be put in contempt, but Minister, we have no other choice. We're doing what we have been elected to do, and that is to best represent the people of Ontario, the people who have put us in this Legislature to act in their

best interests. Unfortunately, the amount of money that has been wasted in lawsuits and relocation costs of gas plants in Mississauga and in Oakville, for which the contempt motion has been put forward, as I've mentioned earlier, is intolerable. It's inexcusable. It is fully unacceptable. That money could have been better spent because it was hard-earned taxpayer money that, in fact, they squandered.

They make the announcements. They don't consult properly, and as a result—who would invest all of that money and get everything to the point of almost ready to go, and then two weeks before an election decide to pull the plug and say, “We're not going to continue. We will not have a gas plant in Mississauga”? That is inexcusable. That is wasted taxpayer money, when in fact this province is on the brink of bankruptcy.

We need change, and unless we get the proper answers and the full truth is revealed with regard to this motion of contempt, we will continue to spiral out of control, and that is not good. It's certainly a bad mark on this government, but it's not good for the total province, the people of Ontario, the people who have put us here. And with that, Speaker, thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: After this much time spent in debate, I usually like to try, for anybody who's watching at home, beginning with a bit of a recap. Let's just start with a recap—where we are, what we're doing—and then we'll continue.

To recap, we're doing the things that we're doing because a committee motion suggested that the Minister of Energy should be held in contempt for breach of privilege in the event that he refused to release records that responded to a motion brought by the PC member from Cambridge on May 16, 2012. That date by which all of those records were supposed to be released was yesterday, and before the termination of yesterday, the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority released all of their records shortly after 12 p.m. yesterday, Monday, September 24. On that basis, one could say on the face of it that the committee's motion has been satisfied and that, pursuant to the express agreement of the committee in its motion of July 11 of this year, indeed, no contempt finding should arise from this matter. But it would seem that, just like the opposition did with the budget, they intend to do with this particular issue.

Again, let's recap the budget. The budget was presented back in late March, and before even reading the budget, the Progressive Conservatives said, “Oh, we're voting against this”—regardless of the fact that the budget of 2012-13 directly included some of the key things that they said in their platform just last year they would support. Even though the budget said that we'll implement some of that, without even having read it, they said, “We're voting against it.”

Yesterday, some 36,000 pages of documentation were released. If indeed this motion was that important and they were worried about what was or wasn't in the ma-

terial that was released, perhaps they could have actually taken a reasonable amount of time, read the material, and if, then, there were significant errors, omissions or whatever, they could then have outlined what these were and brought this motion. But did they actually take time to read the documentation? No. No, they didn't.

Again, the Ontario PCs have ground the business of the Ontario Legislature to a halt, just as they spent all spring delaying government business, keeping the people's business from happening. Now there's this.

Today, we were supposed to have a third reading vote about the healthy homes renovation tax credit. That would have been today. We would have voted on that, and then Ontario's seniors could have a tax credit that could help them improve their lives, help our seniors. The Ontario PCs spent months debating and delaying it. In fact, they talked about everything except that bill. Today, it was going to come to a vote. Was there a secret agreement that in order to once again delay the vote on the healthy homes renovation tax credit, they would introduce this motion and, in so doing, postpone it and postpone it and postpone it?

That's a decision that was made in the backrooms of the Ontario PC Party. What they discussed—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite stray from the motion and the amendments that we're speaking about today. I would ask that the member keep his comments to the motion—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville. He knows what we're debating, and I would encourage him to ensure that his remarks conform with the subject at hand. Thank you.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. To my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, the point of order that you're referring to would be standing order 23(b), and that has to do with the discussion of the matter under consideration. Just in case you choose to raise it again, you can write it down now: standing order 23(b).

This is the reason that the opposition has once again hijacked the Legislature: to debate the nuances of documents—documents that they admit they haven't even read.

1700

Again, let's just do a quick recap. The Conservatives asked the government for documents. The government made the case that providing those documents at the time that they were requested would compromise the ability of the government to negotiate with the proponents of the two power plants.

Let me give you an analogy. Imagine you're negotiating with someone for the purchase of a home, and in your mind you think to yourself, “Okay, this is a GTA home, and I'm willing to pay up to this amount of money for it,” and in the course of this, you send an email to your spouse. If you were the seller, wouldn't you like to know what the buyer's top-line bid would have been?

That's exactly what the Minister of Energy said at the time. He said, “We have got litigation to resolve, and

we're in the middle of negotiations with the proponents" over whatever the litigation or negotiations were about. When the negotiations were concluded, the opposition received 36,000 pages of documents, which they haven't read—and, very tellingly, the government followed through.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, who has the floor.

I have to ask the opposition members to refrain from heckling the member, because I have to be able to hear him.

I return to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Among the other things that I've heard, as I go back to this, is that the opposition has criticized the Minister of Energy for decisions about the circumstances around the cancellation of the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga. There's just a real problem with this particular line of criticism, because at the time that the decision was made, the member for London West was not the Minister of Energy. So how in the name of heaven is the member for London West expected to know the circumstances around the cancellation of a plant at a time when he wasn't the minister of the crown for that particular portfolio? And yet, the previous speaker went on and on about this one particular point.

Speaker, one of the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the members, by name, to come to order. The member for Prince Edward–Hastings, the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex, please allow the member for Mississauga–Streetsville to give his speech and make his points.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the members opposite, some of whom I know—we listened respectfully when they stood up and made their remarks. We respectfully disagree with you, but we have respectfully heard you. The motto of this Legislature, "Audi alteram partem," means, in Latin, "Listen to the other side."

The fact of the matter is that prior to the government's announcement to cancel the gas plants, the following things happened—I'm a Mississauga member, so this is something that I was reading about in the newspapers. The mayor of Mississauga said, "I don't think we need that gas plant." Some of the residents in the area around the gas plant objected to the gas plant. Indeed, the Progressive Conservative Party said, "We don't need that gas plant."

Just to make sure that they remember what it is that they did say, in the Hansard of June 1, 2010, the member for Halton said, "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them."

Interjection: They said that?

Mr. Bob Delaney: They're on the record.

On September 25, 2011, during the election campaign, the Leader of the Opposition said the following: "We've

opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga." So, very clearly, if in government, they too would have cancelled the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga.

This begs the question, then, that if the opposition had committed itself to cancelling the very gas plants that the government cancelled, clearly they had an estimate of what this would cost them. When the government has a chance to place an amendment to this motion, I think we're going to ask for those documents in the possession of the PC Party that estimate what their costs were in cancelling the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga, because we have not seen their estimates. We don't know how much of the taxpayers' money they would have spent. We don't know what assumptions their estimates were based on, and I think in fairness that they should be tabling their estimates of how much the PC Party was willing to spend to cancel the gas plants in Mississauga and in Oakville, and we want to know the basis of them.

Now, similarly, the PC Party of course is committed to cancelling the feed-in tariff program. We want to see their estimates of the economic impact of the cancellation of the feed-in tariff program. This is a program that has 20,000 Ontarians working in a leading-edge industry right here in Ontario, and they're willing to throw them all out of work by cancelling it. There are some costs, and I mean major costs, associated with cancelling the feed-in tariff program, and clearly having made that commitment during the election and repeated it over and over in the House, they've done some of those cost estimates. Why have they not tabled those estimates right here in this House so that we can look at them? It's scandalous. They're clearly sitting on information that deserves to be in the public domain, and they won't table it.

So, on what basis, then, to come back to this, did the PC Party—and it must be said, in fairness, the NDP party also said that they, too, would cancel it. But on what basis did the PC Party conclude that the gas plants weren't needed? Because they did conclude that they weren't needed. We need to know that basis. If we're going to have this debate and make an intelligent decision on this motion, we need to know what their costs were. We need to know how they arrived at their estimates. We need to know on what basis they decided that these gas plants weren't needed.

We also need to have copies of correspondence between the PC Party and the Ontario Power Authority and Hydro One and everybody else, including the proponents. We'd like to see copies of correspondence between the PC Party and the proponents detailing what information they knew and how they used that information to make a decision that these gas plants were not needed. In order to vote intelligently on this motion, I think it's only fair that they provide that.

How, for example, Speaker, did the PC Party arrive at a conclusion that there was a linkage between the fortunes of any candidate in the last election and whether either of the gas plants got the go-ahead? They were just guessing. It's all empty rhetoric.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is absolutely out of order. It is the Minister of Energy who's being held in contempt here, not the PC Party. This is ridiculous. That member has got nothing better to say than that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate your observation. I return to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I guess they're feeling the pain, Speaker. I guess they're feeling the pain.

You know, Speaker, they have made this arrogant and self-serving and, I must add, completely unsubstantiated allegation, and now the PC Party must produce documentary evidence to support the fact that they have entirely failed to show the linkage between either our electoral fortunes in the area or the need for this particular plant.

We need these documents from the PC Party. We need them right now, and we need those documents in full. I anticipate, Speaker, that the next PC Party speaker is going to stand up and tell us exactly when we can expect the tabling of all of their documents that show what the power demand was in the greater Toronto area and exactly why they made the decision they made and when that decision was made. Was it in fact made pursuant to an actual form of numerical analysis and quantitative analysis, or was it just a decision by the PC campaign committee, as we all fully expect that it was?

Interjection: We'd like to know.

Mr. Bob Delaney: We have to know that.

The PC Party members routinely stand up and proclaim a deficit forecast much, much higher than that made by the Ministry of Finance.

1710

But you know, Speaker, the hard-working people of Ontario and this House have kept Ontario's economy outperforming every other national and regional economy in the developed world. While our US brethren continue to flirt with neoconservative ideology that now dominates the once-great party of Leslie Frost, John Roberts and Bill Davis—once-great—the USA, which has also flirted with that ideology, has only recovered roughly 45% of its bottom-of-the-recession job losses. But here in Ontario, we've recovered 130% of our bottom-of-the-recession job losses. There are more people employed full-time in Ontario now than there were at the top of the last growth phase.

Almost certainly those large Progressive Conservative budget estimates stem from all of the money that their party would have to spend on cancellation fees, on shutting down the FIT program, on dismantling the type of infrastructure that this province has built to overcome the very power shortages that, as a government, we inherited in 2003. We should remember that in 2003, not only did we have that blackout, but we also had the spectre of oil-fired generators in our cities. They were so worried, the PC government of the day was, about the

stability of our grid, that they had to set fire to oil, belching pollution into the air in order to simply maintain the power grid.

That doesn't have to happen anymore. The number of smog days in the greater Toronto area has dropped to almost none. The kids who used to go to school with puffers because of the quality of the air no longer have to. Part of the reason for that is that Ontario's power system is robust, and that's largely because this government has invested in a broad and diversified power distribution and power generation system, and we're getting out of coal.

Along the way, Speaker, our government has built 17 gas-fired generating stations. Two of them weren't properly placed, one in Oakville, one in Mississauga; 15 others have worked just fine. Those two will be relocated.

When renovating some \$96 billion of electricity production infrastructure, you pretty much can be sure that not everything is going to go according to plan. When planning to do it over two and three decades, things will change. Even for the PC Party, these things have happened. There was a time in the 1970s when we were digging the Spadina expressway, and the Premier of the day was, very frankly, a role model of mine, a guy who lives in Peel region, a gentleman in every respect: William Davis. Everybody likes William Davis—Brampton Bill. It came to pass that the Spadina expressway, which became known derisively as the Davis Ditch, was cancelled, and it was cancelled for political reasons. It was cancelled because the Premier of the day, a role model of a lot of ours, a man who, after Peter Lougheed, another great Premier and a Conservative, a real Progressive Conservative, a man whose leadership we should emulate—Bill Davis said, "I don't want to bear the political pain of this," and he cancelled it.

Speaker, to recap, this is a debate about a motion asking the Minister of Energy to produce some documents. The Minister of Energy was given a deadline by which he should produce those documents. Ahead of the deadline, the Minister of Energy did produce those documents. If the members of the PC Party had taken the time to read the documents and they wanted to come back to the House with a motion and say, "This is a list of the information that's missing," that might make their resolution more credible. But as it is, this is a motion about nothing by a party that hasn't even read the material provided to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I find it difficult to follow the member for Mississauga–Streetsville. I know he's a goaltender in hockey, and I don't know if he faced a lot of rubber last night or what's happening, but it was sometimes a bit outlandish, some of the things that he included in his speech.

This is a historic day today. I know many Ontarians who tuned in at 10:30 to see and watch question period must have been a little surprised, and I know, especially

in the last 20 minutes, some people who might be watching from home might wonder what the fuss is all about. And sometimes that can be a bit understandable. Debates in this place do tend sometimes to focus on our arcane rules, our procedures that govern how we conduct business here in this chamber on behalf of the people of Ontario.

I think what people need to know today is that this is not one of those occasions, no matter how hard the members opposite, the government members, either in this place or outside of this chamber, will try to tell you.

When we talk about the rules we use this term called "inside baseball," and I want to make sure that people realize this isn't an inside baseball issue we're discussing today. We're not debating an obscure principle when we talk about the member for Cambridge's privilege that was breached by the Minister of Energy, as we all clearly know that it has.

This goes to the right of our democratic system—the very heart of our democratic system. It speaks to the ability of opposition members to hold the government to account and to prevent them, as a government, from abusing their power. That's what I think we are discussing today. We've got a government that has abused its power, and it's betrayed the trust of people in this province who entrusted them about a year ago to make decisions in their best interests. Instead, we know that the government made a very calculated decision based on consultation with its campaign team for purely political purposes.

With all of the great needs we have in this province today, with the incredible fiscal challenge that we're facing, this government made a decision to spend \$640 million to save a handful of Liberal seats. What this government has done by throwing away more than half a billion taxpayers' dollars on a scandalous seat-saver scheme is utterly shameful, and by failing to comply with the Speaker's ruling to come clean, with not only the members of this Legislature and, by extension, the people of Ontario, is also an utter disgrace.

What they've done diminishes this place. We've reached a new low in Ontario's political history with the efforts of the McGuinty government. It's fed a growing cynicism that Ontarians feel about their elected officials, and that cynicism affects every single one of us, all 107 MPPs. It affects us. The actions undermine the integrity of this House and those of us who are entrusted with conducting business on behalf of the people in all of our 107 ridings who elected us.

As upset as Ontarians should be about the wasted money, I think every single member of this House should be outraged at what this government has done, especially those in the government backbench. The McGuinty government's abuse of power and the public trust makes it more difficult for every single one of us to execute our duties, both here in the Legislature and in our ridings. It produces a sense of skepticism, cynicism and mistrust, and it colours everything we do—the way a handful of McGuinty cabinet ministers and the Premier himself have undermined everyone in this place.

1720

Beyond the effect it has on us, it's actually weakening our democracy by reducing the number of people who actually participate in it. The cynicism this government has fed not only has people tuning us out between elections but also has them ignoring very important debates of public policy. That's bad enough, but what's worse is the fact that it may be one of the key reasons why people fail to show up at the polls and participate during provincial elections. The conduct of this government cheapens those of us who answer the call of public service and do so out of a desire to live up to the standards of those great men and women who took their seats before us.

It's actually unbelievable—I've heard a number of members mention these names earlier, but I want to express how unbelievable it is that the government House leader, someone who's up to his elbows in this shameful conduct, would stand up this morning and invoke the names of great leaders like John Robarts and Bill Davis.

I recall reading that the Premier, Premier McGuinty, met with Mr. Davis following last fall's election to get some advice on how to manage affairs in a minority Legislature. I don't particularly know what advice Mr. Davis gave Mr. McGuinty that day, but I know for certain, based on the way that this government has conducted itself over the last year, that the Premier ignored that advice.

I can tell you that if the Premier sought Mr. Davis's advice on the matter at hand today, well, I have to say that we wouldn't be here having this debate today. That's because leaders like Mr. Davis and Mr. Robarts built this province to be the envy of every single other Canadian province and, I might add, people around the world. They were able to do so not only because they had a grand vision about the province of Ontario and how best to set it up for a bright future; they were great leaders because they inspired people to follow their vision and to make it their own. They managed to do this in large part because, at the very core, they respected the institutions and the people of Ontario in a way that the McGuinty government has repeatedly shown it lacks. Rather than inspire people to follow, this Premier and cabinet seek to continue to divide Ontarians with wedge issues. The result may be that they've been pretty effective at the polls, but we've paid a steep price, I would suggest, for their efforts.

We know that under nine years of Dalton McGuinty and this government, they've largely squandered the economic legacy of Bill Davis and John Robarts. There are plenty of statistics I can recite today and others have recited before, but this power plant issue is tearing away the esteem and high regard that the people of Ontario once felt for their government because of the admirable and honourable ways we used to have with leaders like Robarts and Davis when they did their business.

To the government House leader, who used their names this morning, I say, sir, what our caucus is engaged in today upholds the finest traditions of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario and every single

one of their predecessors in this place. What we're trying to do with this debate is hold you to account so that we can get all of the information. We need to expose the full scope of this particular scandal. It's not a cheap political stunt; it's for the greater good to have this level of accountability come forward. As the 107 members of this Legislative Assembly, we have to preserve the dignity of this place, which I believe has been put into jeopardy because of the cynical conduct of the McGuinty government and its cabinet.

I also want to take extreme objection to the government House leader's characterization of this Legislature this morning by calling it a "kangaroo court." I think it's offensive—and I withdraw that reference, Speaker. I think it's offensive that any officer of this Legislature would have such a low regard that he would use comments like that this morning.

MPPs who sit here have a right to question that when 36,000 pages are provided, with many of them blanked out or redacted—how can we feel that that complies in any way with the Speaker's September 13 ruling? It certainly doesn't. Only this government would be so arrogant to think they could pull a stunt like they pulled and not have someone try to hold them to account.

I was also disappointed this morning to hear the Attorney General's comments. He's a man that I've known for decades, and I have a great deal of respect for him, but I was very disappointed today when he suggested that our debate today is somehow—and I think he used the words "shutting out the people of Ontario from the real issues." With all due respect to the Attorney General, I think this is a very important debate we're having about why a government would obstruct our ability to hold them to account.

He went on in his speech—the Attorney General—to suggest that we should take this debate out of the public forum that we're having it in today and take it behind closed doors. He mentioned the House leaders would be a place where he felt it should be discussed. Well, having participated in part of those discussions and meetings following the Speaker's ruling two weeks ago, I can tell you that that suggestion has absolutely no point in moving that forward.

Further, I think having that debate behind closed doors would run counter to what our caucus is trying to accomplish today. We're having this debate instead of going about our regularly scheduled business because we want to finally shed a light and give a full public airing to the depths that the Dalton McGuinty government has sunk. We are not going to assist them in keeping the truth from seeing the light of day, and we're not going to agree to shove these discussions behind closed doors. Besides, it's unreasonable to think that any amount of conversation or negotiation is going to produce a different result because we have to look at how we arrived at this debate today.

We know the origin was the request from the Standing Committee on Estimates that the Minister of Energy produce all of the documents associated with the Missis-

sauga and Oakville power plants. The government ignored that original request. It led to the member for Cambridge rising on August 27 to draw attention to the fact that his privilege has been breached by the minister's refusal to comply. That did turn up the heat on the government, but they continued to stall. They even tried to hide behind solicitor-client privilege. It was almost a laughable excuse.

Then, Speaker, we had the September 13 ruling, which made it clear that the jig was up and that all of those documents had to come forward. But what did the government do? They still played games. The government waited until the very last moment, and only because of the Speaker's deadline—and they still tried to bury the opposition and the media with the mountain of documents.

I want to thank the members of the Ontario PC caucus who really have demonstrated throughout the debate today that we knew that the government wasn't going to come clean, and we wanted them to continue to go forward.

That's why, when you look at the documents—how can they claim that they've complied when, in all of the pages, there's not a single email from the former Minister of Energy? There's nothing from the Premier. There's nothing from the campaign team, despite the fact that the finance minister, when he testified on the decision to scrap Oakville in the final days of last year's campaign, acknowledged they were political. And I know that—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Mississauga.

Mr. Steve Clark: Sorry, Mississauga.

I know that the member for Kitchener-Conestoga did quote—and I will for the record quote the Minister of Finance from that estimates committee on July 19: "This was a campaign undertaking at a time when I think we were still behind in the polls, so it required a government decision, which occurred after the election." Speaker, there's still no paper trail in any of these documents that were released. You have to ask that question: Where is it, Speaker?

1730

We know, when you release 36,000 pieces of paper—the member for Nipissing quoted many of them this morning. There were thousands that were either redacted or completely blank. If nothing else, we need to come forward to find out the details of these two power plants and the accounting on what the Liberal Party of Ontario owes the people of Ontario.

The Liberal Party of Ontario made the decision to cancel these plants to save Liberal seats and cling to power. They were clearly partisan decisions. They were totally counter to sound public policy, and we can prove this, even with the limited amount of documents that we've received as part of the Speaker's order. So I think it's only fair that the Liberal Party of Ontario pay that money back to the people of Ontario for their political decisions.

I think it's an easy debt to square, because it can be measured in dollars and cents, but I think the damage to

the public's trust is going to take a lot longer for us to rebuild. I'm hoping that the government does see the error of its ways and starts the healing process by releasing, in their entirety, all of those documents, as per the Speaker's order. I hope that soon we'll have this debate and move it forward into the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

On this side of the House, we've warned the government for years about their mismanagement of the energy file. It's been ruining Ontario. We've talked, on this side of the House, about their disastrous schemes like the Green Energy Act, the Samsung deal, and, yes, to first place and then cancel both the Mississauga and Oakville power plants. I think they tell a sorry tale of this government and how clueless they are about ways to generate affordable, reliable energy. The fact that Ontarians are now paying double what some jurisdictions in Canada pay for electricity is ridiculous.

We can now point to some of the terrible decisions that Ministers of Energy have made. The result is businesses are being wooed elsewhere for cheap power. Jobs are leaving our province. That's why we've got 600,000 people in this province looking for work today. It's part of the reason why entire sectors of our manufacturing industry and our resource sectors have simply disappeared. They can't afford to do business in this province because of this government's energy fiascos.

Residential users, meanwhile, have seen their family budgets pressured to the breaking point by rates that have soared from 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour in 2003 to 10.7 cents in 2011. Speaker, that's an increase of 150%, and it's just part of this tale of incompetence and mismanagement at an unimaginable scale that we've seen from the McGuinty government on the energy file.

The Mississauga and Oakville power plant scandals are just another sorry, sad chapter in the McGuinty government's poor energy file. Only a government this adrift would choose to fix a problem from its own doing by making a hundreds-of-millions-of-dollars decision to throw money to relocate these plants, seemingly on a whim.

You look at the fact that there's no rhyme or reason to pick Lambton and Lennox. All we know is this government has backed itself into a corner. They needed to make a decision, and Lambton and Lennox were chosen because they were available. That's why they made that decision. Were there better options? Were there better, more cost-effective solutions? Perhaps, but we'll never know, because the minister didn't take the time to look at them.

Frankly, if you look at the way that this government has operated its public policy process on this file, it's ridiculous. You look at the eastern Ontario decision. The fact that they have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to create transmission lines just shows the hastiness of this government when they made this decision.

Speaker, in closing, you look at one minister dealing with the decisions of another minister. It's just a sad way that we've progressed with the McGuinty government and this file.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, normally I'm very happy and energized to rise in this House and speak and engage in healthy debate, both here and at committees. That's what the residents of Pickering-Scarborough East sent me here to do. We're all honourable members. We don't always agree, and that's fine. That's why we're here. We're legislators. We're here to engage in those healthy debates and to help make good policies and legislation for the people in our ridings and for people in Ontario. It disturbs me greatly, Speaker, how caustic and negative some of the discussions have been in this House very recently. I think it's not consistent with what honourable members do, quite frankly, Speaker. As I said, we don't have to agree all the time, but the tone and tenor of the dialogue here has been quite negative.

Having said that, Speaker, I'm a practical person. I think most members of the House are indeed practical people. Ontarians are practical people, and they expect us to be practical in conducting our business. They expect us to be practical in dealing with taxpayers' dollars, because at the end of the day, we shouldn't have to remind ourselves that we are here overseeing the programs and services in Ontario using taxpayers' dollars.

As I understand it, the run-up to this motion and the debate that we're currently engaging in has to do with the release of these documents that we've been talking about. Just yesterday, shortly after announcing the settlement of the Oakville plant matter, the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority released all 36,000 records that were responsive to the original motion of the estimates committee. The government even went so far as to put each and every document on a USB key and provided one each to the opposition parties, in addition to the Clerk.

The request of the committee for these documents, in my view—and I think in the public's view, Speaker—is that the matter is satisfied, that the matter should indeed be over. Why are we standing here in the Legislature debating this? We should be talking about moving forward on other important pieces of legislation. Like many people, I came into work this week hoping to discuss a range of important other initiatives, voting on key things that have been debated in a very healthy way in this House.

Interjection: The seniors' tax credit.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Yes, the seniors' tax credit for one, but there's also some really good private members' motions that were scheduled to be debated this week, and I'm not hopeful, given the tone and tenor of the discussion, that we'll get to those very good private members' resolutions. I would say, from my understanding of those motions, that two of the three come from the opposition side that are excellent motions. So my fear is that we won't get there.

As I said, I'm a practical person, and it's my job to account to the residents of Pickering-Scarborough East about what's going on—and, to the extent I can, to all

Ontarians. So I think what I want to do is talk a bit about the estimates committee, if I may, because I did spend some time at the estimates committee in the spring and the summer, so I know first-hand a bit about what happened there. Over the last few weeks, the official opposition seems to suggest, and even the third party suggested, that the Minister of Energy wilfully attempted to hide or conceal these documents from the Legislature. That's fine. That's their opening position. They're free to say that. But really, Speaker, I was there when this started at committee, and nothing could be further from the truth. I think we have to look at the facts. I think we have to be practical about this.

Between May 9 and June 11, the Minister of Energy appeared before the Standing Committee on Estimates for the purpose of answering questions regarding the 2012-13 estimates of the Ministry of Energy. All ministers do that from time to time: appear before the Standing Committee on Estimates. That is the function of that committee, to review the detailed finances and so forth of the ministry that is appearing before that committee.

1740

While the minister answered questions related to many issues, the committee members from the official opposition spent considerable time asking the minister questions relating to the two gas plants, which were to have been built in Oakville and Mississauga respectively. When he was before the committee, the Minister of Energy was placed in a very difficult position, because he was repeatedly asked to answer questions relating specifically to the outstanding legal proceedings and confidential negotiations.

I think the taxpayers of Ontario understand that it's important to protect the public's interests. And when we talk about public interest, we're talking about taxpayers. We're talking about the implications of legal proceedings, and if they're not handled properly, if they are not handled in a confidential matter, that actually translates, at a practical level, to increased costs to taxpayers. And so that's where the Minister of Energy was coming from. He attempted to strike a balance, Speaker, between the committee's authority to ask those questions and the needs of the public interests in the middle of highly sensitive commercial negotiations and litigation. A healthy debate, yes; questions, yes, but I think, again, asked and answered many times, and unfortunately the opposition didn't take no for an answer, that we were indeed dealing with confidential negotiations.

When you are a minister of the crown, it is that balancing act that has to take place. The Chair of our estimates committee, the honourable member for Beaches—East York, recognized how precarious the situation was for the minister. In fact, he repeatedly ruled—repeatedly, Speaker—that while the committee members were permitted to ask such questions, the minister was able to exercise his discretion and respond to such questions in a manner that protected the interests of the province. Isn't that why we're all here? We are here to protect the

interests of Ontarians. We are here to advance the interests of Ontarians. We are here to deliver good programs—health care, education, social services and the environment. That is the job.

Going back to the estimates committee, I refer to Hansard, Speaker, on May 16, where Mr. Prue, the Chair of the committee, said, rightly so, "The minister has the right to decline either giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during his answering of the questions."

Further in Hansard, May 16: "I would advise that I'm going to allow the motion to proceed, but I would also advise—and I think the minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and I would expect him to do so. That would be my ruling." When we talk about not prejudicing the province in any way, we're talking, again, about protecting taxpayers. That's what it's all about. We are entrusted with the public funds of this province, to spend them wisely, to put them to those key provincial programs, to make them efficient and effective and not to put that in jeopardy.

So the minister relied on the Chair's repeated statements in ruling that the minister was permitted to respond to questions and document requests from the committee members in a manner that protected the interests of the province and taxpayers, and all of our constituents—not just mine in Pickering—Scarborough East, or the minister's in his riding in London, but all Ontarians.

As a result, the minister wrote to the committee on May 30—we're going back to May 30 here—and advised the committee that he was exercising his discretion and would not be able to produce the requested documentation as it was confidential, subject to solicitor-client privilege, litigation privilege or of a highly commercial sensitive nature. Unfortunately, the official opposition ignored the flags that were raised by our Minister of Energy. They showed no restraint, Speaker—something we've seen so often.

On June 5, the member from Cambridge moved a motion to report to the House the minister's failure to produce all responsive records pursuant to the motion of May 16 and to kick-start these contempt proceedings.

The official opposition and the third party, in their attempt to vilify the Minister of Energy and score I don't know what kind of gains, will suggest that the minister is hiding something or concealing something. It's simply not true. We need to deal with the facts, Speaker, and the record shows that the honourable Minister of Energy, at all times, was trying to balance two important yet competing interests: supremacy of Parliament versus protecting taxpayers' interests.

Here's a very important point, Speaker: On July 10, the minister announced that the OPA had reached an agreement with Greenfield to relocate the Mississauga facility and that the government had accepted the OPA's recommendation to relocate the Mississauga facility to

the Lambton station in Sarnia. I, too, recall during the election, Speaker, that all parties—not just us; all parties—agreed that that plant should not proceed.

The legal matters relating to the Mississauga gas plant having been settled, the minister directed his ministry to provide the committee with all correspondence relating to the Mississauga facility that was responsive to the motion of May 16—we're going back to May 16—except for the records that were subject to solicitor-client privilege. Those documents were indeed provided to the committee. If any incorrect impression is being made that nothing was forthcoming, that is not true. If the minister was trying to hide or conceal documents, why would he have released them the moment he had a settlement with respect to the Mississauga gas plant? Again, I implore all members to deal with the facts of the case.

This brings us to the Speaker's ruling. As the negotiations regarding the Oakville plant were still ongoing, the minister was still not in a position to produce the document prior to the Speaker's ruling, and that was fairly recent. On September 13 of this year, the Speaker ruled that, while a *prima facie* breach of privilege had been established, he would set aside the matter and ask the three House leaders to take it upon themselves to find a path that could satisfy the request of the estimates committee. That's what minority government is all about: people and parties working together in the best interests of their constituents, and all of Ontario. I think that was an incredibly appropriate ruling for the Speaker to give, because that is the job of minority government. It's the job of opposition parties, both the official opposition and the third party, to work together and resolve these things. Quite frankly, that's what taxpayers demand of us, Speaker. They demand that of us, and I honestly think there would be little patience for a protracted, impractical delay of other important government business, and that is our job. That's why we've been sent here.

In the traditional procedure, when a Speaker apprises the House that this *prima facie* breach of privilege has been found, the member raising the matter is allowed to move a motion. In this matter, however, the Speaker exercised his discretion following the novel approach adopted by Speaker Milliken in the Afghan detainee matter, by setting aside his ruling in order to allow House leaders to devise a means where both their concerns are met, or in our case three House leaders. We've seen it before where the House leaders have come together and worked effectively, and I don't know for the life of me why that can't happen in this case too.

This approach was taken for a few reasons, and it's evident in the Speaker's ruling. The Speaker recognized the competing interests at play: the interests of the committee in exercising its parliamentary privileges, and the interests of the Minister of Energy in temporarily—this is very important—refraining from the disclosure of sensitive information in the midst of commercial negotiations, and the recognition of an opportunity for the three parties, through frank communication, to settle the

matter in a way that satisfied the request of the estimates committee.

1750

Again, I look back to the people of Ontario and what they expect of people in this Legislature. Quite frankly, they're not that fussy about rules and procedure and how it all works, but they do expect us to work together in the best interests of Ontarians and to move on in a practical manner when we can. The Speaker's ruling clearly laid out that this is a unique situation, unlike other cases, and it warranted a unique solution.

Again, I go back to, what is this all about? I think all of us are practical members. At the heart of this was the release of documents. I'm a new member, and maybe I don't understand absolutely everything, but I kind of get how it works. What was requested has happened; the documents have been released.

I'm scratching my head here, Speaker, wondering why this is dragging on. Why is the language so caustic? Why is the tone and tenor of the debate going to a fairly low common denominator? In my view, this should be over. We should be moving on. We should be talking about what's important to Ontarians. We should be standing here, working together, debating legislation that's important to the province.

In my last few minutes, I just have to talk about my observations of the Minister of Energy throughout this entire process.

My goodness, Speaker, it has been a long and protracted process. I'm very concerned that it will continue far beyond what it should; it will continue far beyond what Ontarians expect of us; it will continue far beyond what any of our constituents expect from each and every one of us as MPPs.

Past behaviour is a good indicator of future behaviour, and the Minister of Energy has an absolutely impeccable record. He is a man of integrity. He served as our Attorney General of this province for four years. He has been a well-respected and honourable member of the Legislature for nine years. He knows what he's doing, Speaker. Before he came to this place, he was a member of the Ontario bar, of the highest standing and reputation, for over 25 years. He opened community law clinics and taught law classes in his spare time. I've heard him talk in caucus about some of the excellent community work he has done to serve people in his riding and in Ontario. He always puts the interests of Ontarians first, and that is exactly what any good and honourable member would do.

It's a sad day when we really see that tone and tenor of the conversation go down, when I'm sensing more personal attacks rather than healthy and constructive debate. Ontarians absolutely deserve better.

I will proudly stand on this side of the House any day, any week, and support the principled actions of our Minister of Energy.

Having said that, where do we go now? I don't think the road forward is entirely clear. Are we debating this for hours? Is it going to be days? Is it going to be weeks?

I think that is a fairly unproductive use of time. It's an unproductive use of taxpayers' dollars. The time we're spending on this is time we're not spending on important government legislation. We're here to shape the legislation and programs related to health care, education, social policy, the environment, the economy. That's what Ontarians have asked us to do. Yes, it's a minority government; we need to work together. But the thought of spending hours, days, weeks or, God forbid, much longer than that on this, when in fact what's been asked has been delivered—the documents were requested; they've

been released. So, really, I think each of us has to be able to stand up to our own constituencies and explain what the heck is going on here.

I, for one, and my colleagues on the government side want to move forward constructively, productively and work together as we move forward.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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Wednesday 26 September 2012

Mercredi 26 septembre 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 26 September 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 26 septembre 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, in accordance with section 87 of the Legislative Assembly Act, the names of the following persons appointed to serve on the Board of Internal Economy have been communicated to me as chair of the Board of Internal Economy. The Honourable Dwight Duncan, MPP, is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council from among the members of the executive council. David Oraziotti, MPP, is appointed by the caucus of the government. Sylvia Jones, MPP, is appointed by the caucus of the official opposition. Cindy Forster, MPP, is appointed by the caucus of the New Democratic Party.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 25, 2012, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion by Mr. Leone arising from the Speaker's ruling of September 13, 2012.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join in the debate on this motion of contempt that is placed before us as parliamentarians.

It was interesting to hear a little bit—and I'll get back to that a little later—about the pleas from the government side that we should not be proceeding with this motion for compassionate reasons. I'll give you a little history about Liberal compassion a little later.

Speaker, let's talk a little bit about the history. The people in Oakville and Mississauga were clearly opposed to the gas plants being erected in their municipalities, in their neighbourhoods, from the get-go. That was made clear. That was spoken about in this Legislature, and it was spoken about in public opinion pieces. The citizens made their views pretty clear. But the government pledged to plow ahead regardless.

Now, 11 days before the election of 2011, the decision was made all of a sudden some morning that we're not going to proceed—the decision was made two years ago to cancel the plant in Oakville, and we've waited this long for a resolution on that. The decision was made 11 days before the campaign in 2011 that they would not proceed with the gas plant in Mississauga. And yes, the

Liberals will say that there were statements from both the Tories and the NDP at that time that they supported that decision that those gas plants shouldn't be built. Well, of course we said that, because we had never said they should be built in the first place. That's the crux of the matter.

Then we fast-forward a little bit to the estimates committee going on earlier this year, when the Minister of Finance admits at committee—a minister of the crown is considered to be under oath at any committee—that the decision was purely a political one, prompted and made by the Liberal campaign team. It was not made by the OPA, not made by an independent panel that came to the conclusion that this was a wrong decision that should be reversed. No, it was made by the Liberal campaign team just 11 days before a provincial election—a provincial election, I might add, Mr. Speaker, that was highly competitive and resulted in a Liberal minority government. For the first time, Dalton McGuinty found himself in a minority Parliament as Premier, not a majority.

They're wondering why this motion came to the floor in the first place. What option would the estimates committee have at that time, when a minister of the crown admits that a decision to cancel a power plant, resulting in a \$190-million—and now we know from our energy critic, Mr. Fedeli, and his dogged detective work, that it now is at least \$195 million to cancel and relocate the Mississauga power plant. Put yourself in the shoes of the folks on the estimates committee. Would they not be irresponsible as parliamentarians if they did not, at that time, demand to know what are the facts, what are the issues, what was the process that went into making this decision?

We need to have the documentation on everything that happened resulting in that decision to move that power plant. If they did not ask for those papers, Mr. Speaker, I contend that they would not be doing their work as parliamentarians. The estimates committee did what they are tasked and have sworn an oath to do here, and that is, the estimates committee is there to challenge and judge and analyze the estimates put forth by the government of this province. So they did what they had to do.

What was the result of their request to the Minister of Energy? A refusal to release the documents, which resulted in them turning to you, Speaker—turning to this Parliament and turning to you—and bringing forth a motion requesting that you would demand that the government release the documents. That was made, I believe, on August 27. Then you made your ruling on September 13, I believe, that compelled the government

to release the documents on or before 6 p.m. on September 24.

The resulting release of those documents at some time in the early afternoon or around noon hour on the 24th then compelled my colleague from Cambridge, Mr. Leone, to proceed with this motion. What we saw yesterday from my colleague Mr. Fedeli from Nipissing was that irrespective of what the government said they would do and committed to you, Speaker, and to this Parliament—that they would release every single document related to the cancellation and relocation of those power plants—what did they do? They released a whole lot of redacted papers.

0910

You know, we used to think about the electricity system as being subject to brownouts and blackouts, depending upon the circumstances, but it is now subject to whiteouts as well, because what Mr. Fedeli saw yesterday was nothing. You would think you were in a snowstorm with what he got as papers for the release of the documents concerning those plants.

We have no choice but to continue to press this issue. I hope that at some point the committee has the opportunity to delve much deeper into this issue, because it is the absolute right of the people of this province to know where \$650 million of their money is going.

I'm flabbergasted at the approach of the government, that they would expect the opposition, on this side of the House, both us and the third party, to simply say, "Okay, thank you very much. You've decided where they're going. We'll just call it a day. We don't really need to know what happened." It's sort of like if the bank robber gets up and confesses and says, "I did it. I'm sorry." Do you think society is going to say, "Oh, no penalties for bank robbers if they confess"? Come on. I mean, this is just absolutely ridiculous, the approach they've taken.

But I understand their approach. I understand it's the "Why pick on Minister Bentley?" approach. I want to make it very clear: This really isn't about Chris Bentley. This is about the sad excuse for a politicized energy policy that has evolved on that side of the House. That's what it is: a sad excuse. A sad excuse when you site power plants based completely on politics and un-site them based completely on politics. You make bad decisions and follow them with bad decisions totally for political reasons. That is not acceptable.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, we're off to a good start. We've got five sidebars going on over here. They're talking while your speaker is speaking. Okay, the rules are going to change. We're going to have a little quiet in here so we can listen. This is a very serious situation and I think people should be listening to this. It probably hasn't happened in over 100 years, so I think a little quiet will be nice as of now. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They don't bother me at all.

Anyway, this is not about Chris Bentley. It's about the government and what they've turned our electricity

system into. Let's just talk about the role of the OPA in this. Part of me is sympathetic towards the OPA. The other part of me is damned upset, because this was an agency that was supposed to take the politics out of the electricity system. That was the commitment by Dwight Duncan when he tabled Bill 100 several years ago, back in 2004. We were going to take the politics out of electricity. Well, we know that the politics have never been more ingrained in our electricity system than they are today.

I would suggest to the people of the OPA that you have been emasculated by this government. You have been neutered by this government. If the people at the OPA really cared about their own self-esteem, they would have resigned en masse and said this kind of interference in the electricity system is unacceptable—unacceptable.

There is not a single scientific, engineered reason for the decisions that this government has made. Not one. And what has it resulted in? Yesterday I heard from the Attorney General and I heard from the Minister of the Environment how we should just kind of play nice, that this is really unnecessary. This is \$650 million.

Speaker, you weren't here and I wasn't here, but I was paying attention when the opposition brought forward a motion of contempt back in 2003. For what? Not for hundreds of millions of dollars possibly being misappropriated. No. It was because the government held the budget outside of the Legislature and the opposition felt they didn't have quick access to the papers. That tied up this Legislature, because of them over there, for two weeks, from May 8 to May 21, 2003. They didn't seem to think it was a problem then.

You know, it's funny; you could be the most ardent supporter of capital punishment, which is what they seemed to be when it came to the Magna budget or the debate on Walkerton or anything else. They were the ardent supporters of capital punishment. But isn't it amazing how all of a sudden you become an abolitionist when it is your head in the guillotine? That's what happened here yesterday. The Minister of the Environment, the Attorney General—and I understand the Attorney General was having his Kingston day and he wanted everybody in the gallery to see—

Hon. John Gerretsen: You didn't show up.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I was busy in caucus. Apparently, it went really well at your caucus, too; we'll talk about that in a minute. So he had his guests from Kingston here, and he wanted to show what a statesman he was. Look, I love John Gerretsen. I think he's a great guy. I don't love you in that way, but you know which way I'm—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke knows that we don't have cross-talks. You go through me, and try to keep the personal situation out of it. I'd appreciate it—and the Attorney General does not have to respond loudly to the member from Renfrew, okay? Next time, the Speaker will be warning.

Hon. John Gerretsen: On a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It better be a point of order, I hope.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Could you make sure I get a copy of that last Hansard there, Speaker?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw. I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: So I understand what his motivation was; I understand why he wanted to appear statesmanlike yesterday. But I wonder who was the statesmanlike person in the Liberal caucus yesterday.

What I find peculiar is that the Premier of Ontario decided he would rather go try to put the Liberal spin on this issue down in Oakville and tell the folks how wonderful he was that he spent \$650 million of other people's money to rid them of power plants in Oakville and Mississauga. He would rather do that than face his caucus yesterday afternoon, which is deeply divided over this issue.

They are worried because they know, when they go to their home ridings, that people are going to be asking them, "How can you justify X number of thousand cancer treatments, and how many thousand MRI treatments and how many hip replacements or knee replacements or cataract surgeries?"—

Interjection: Hospitals.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —"or how many hospitals have you displaced because of your political decisions with respect to this power plant?" That's why every single document, unredacted, must be made available to this House.

So when you ask yourselves then again about the decisions that have been made—we know that when the Mississauga power plant was cancelled, another stressed area of the province, when it came to electricity, was the Kitchener–Waterloo area and Cambridge. They didn't move that plant there because they knew the pressure for a competitive bid process would have been so high, because there are other companies all looking to build a plant in that area. What did they do? They moved it to Sarnia.

Now what did they do with the Oakville plant? They know that the competitive bid process would come into play if they were going to site that plant where electricity was actually needed, so they put it at the Lennox site, in Bath, near Kingston. Speaker, that plant barely runs. There is no need for additional electricity generation in that area of the province—none. If you look at Lennox over the last several years, I guarantee that it's less than 10%, probably under 5%, utilization. There's no need for the power there.

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But why did they make that decision? Because it was a quick and easy one. You talk about cynicism. Last week they're telling us they need six weeks to deal with this issue, and all of a sudden they can come up with a new site at the eleventh hour on Monday morning. That's when politics trumps policy, and that's what has happened in this government.

A government that is on its last legs starts to make a lot of mistakes. They're making mistake after mistake after mistake because they are desperate, and they will try to hide the facts or redact them. They will try to do anything so that the public doesn't get to find the true motivation behind their decisions. That's what's going on here.

You look at Lennox; if you don't need power in that area, where do you need it? Well, you need it in the western GTA. You need it in KW. You need it in other parts of the province. So how are you going to get it there? We're not in Star Trek yet, and Scotty can't send some lithium crystals or whatever they do to send the power down there. No. We're going to have to build wires and towers and poles. It's called transmission. So \$200 million will be spent on transmission to move that power to where it's needed—\$200 million. Then they have the issue of, "Oh, what are we going to do with the turbines that they were going to stick in Oakville? Oh, we'll buy them"—\$210 million.

So how do you get out there? I'll tell you. That's what happens at Lennox: These turbines spin, but they don't produce any power because we don't need it. With their power policy, every time that we have a surplus here in the province, we see our water spilling over our dams, while they pay massive amounts for their green energy subsidies that you and I end up paying for. Every day, we're sending export power, for nothing—maybe a cent, maybe zero, maybe below zero—and paying premium prices for it because of the contracts that they have signed under the Green Energy Act.

When we asked for the records, the records that have been requested don't even cover the decision to all of a sudden, at the eleventh hour, relocate this power plant to the Lennox property owned by OPG. Well, it would be probably adjacent to it; they'll probably have to buy some property apparently beside the current OPG plant. It doesn't even talk about the decision process that they went through there. So I think the next step for this committee, and why we have to have this committee working and get this motion struck so this committee can get to work, is so that they can get to the bottom of it.

They talked over there yesterday about good government and moving on. Oh, yes, we do need to move on, and the people of this province of Ontario would like to move on. But they're not going to move on with some hocus-pocus excuses and a number game on the part of the government. They're prepared to move on when they receive all of the information with respect to these decisions. They will then be prepared to pass judgment. At the next general election, the people in this province will have the right to pass judgment on this government and its record. They will judge them on, have they been truthful to the people? Have they been open and transparent as they promised?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Accountable.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are they accountable to the people? Can we count on them when they say they're

doing something? Can we count on it to be the fact? The people will evaluate them and they will make a decision after the next general election.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that my remarks will be somewhat less theatrical than what we have heard from the opposition.

Usually when I rise in this House, I say that I am pleased to address the business at hand, and I say that sincerely. I'm pleased to address government bills. I'm pleased to address a private member's public business as it arises before us, because I see in those bills a genuine effort on the part of the member to try to advance life here in Ontario. I have to say today that I'm extremely disappointed to have to rise in this House. I'm disappointed with the amendment to the amendment—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sit down. We don't need to hear you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think, opposition party, that they showed you respect and listened. They might not have liked what you said, but they listened to you intently. I would expect the same courtesy to be given to them. The first person who yells out is going to get a first warning.

Continue.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are now debating an amendment to an amendment to a motion brought by the member from Cambridge. We are not discussing, as I would have hoped we would, some of the important legislation to improve public services here in Ontario. Yesterday, we were supposed to have a third reading vote on the healthy homes renovation tax credit, something that will improve Ontarians' lives and help our seniors. I was eager to vote on that excellent piece of legislation. We're also trying to pass the Family Caregiver Leave Act, which would provide job-protected leave to help hard-working Ontarians care for ailing family members. But that's not moving forward either.

When I was re-elected last October and it became apparent to my constituents that we were in a minority Parliament situation, many of them said to me, "Please, please, make this Parliament work." I know that on our side of the House we've shown every willingness to make this Parliament work. What we see from the opposition is a concerted effort to derail the business of this House, the people's business.

Now, let's turn particularly to the issue of the power plants and the cancellation of both the Oakville and the Mississauga facilities.

I was very involved with the issue of where the power plant in northern York region would be situated. Certainly, when the public looks at major infrastructure investments in their community or adjacent to their community, they're concerned. People hear terms like "megawatts," and for some reason they find this intimidating. When I hear the term "megawatt," I see turbines turning, and I

see industry being supplied with a reliable source of power.

In the case of northern York region, there was certainly controversy about the location, adjacent to the Holland Marsh—perhaps not an ideal location, situated in the greenbelt. But the need for power was such in northern York region—for our businesses, for our residences—that overall, after many public meetings and much consultation, I'm happy to say that the York Energy Centre is now up and running; it has been for some six months. And those who were extremely opposed at the time to the placement of that power plant in that location in northern York region have publicly acknowledged that, in fact, they do not see any detrimental effects, either to human health or to the health of the vegetables in the marsh. All is working as it should.

However, in the case of Oakville, it was determined that the public, the community in that area, was raising significant concerns. They were voiced by the community and by local elected officials, including the mayor of Oakville, Rob Burton; our own colleague MPP Kevin Flynn; and yes, of course, MPP Ted Chudleigh. Our government's decision that was made in October 2010 for the project not to proceed was supported by Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs, and I'd just like to quote and remind the members that on June 1, 2010, according to Hansard, Mr. Chudleigh said, "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them." So clearly, we were previously in agreement on the relocation of the Oakville facility, and I'm very happy to hear from the Minister of Energy that a resolution was successfully reached on September 24, 2012.

Now, when it comes to the Mississauga situation, there were many concerns raised over several years; in fact, since April 2005, when the Ontario Power Authority contracted with Greenfield South to develop and operate a 300-megawatt natural-gas-fired electricity generating station in Mississauga.

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Over the course of the next number of years, particularly as construction got under way at the facility, community concerns were brought to the attention of the government, and all three of the political parties during the fall 2011 general election campaign turned their attention to this particular issue and they made the same commitment as we had made during the course of the campaign. Both the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party and the Ontario New Democratic Party made the same commitment. And the *Globe and Mail* of September 25, 2011, quoted Mr. Hudak as saying, "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and"—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I guess you didn't take me seriously. There are five people talking over there. If you want to hold court, go out there and hold court. I want to hear the speaker. This is a serious issue. Thank you.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Shortly after being re-elected, our government did announce its intention to relocate the Mississauga facility. In this case, there were some formal litigation proceedings under way, as well as confidential settlement discussions in relation to the cancellation of this project, and a resolution was successfully reached on July 10, 2012. I think what is so telling is that, immediately after that, the Minister of Energy released the documents that had been requested by the committee on estimates.

My other colleagues have detailed some of their experiences on the estimates committee. They were there between May 9 and July 11 when the Minister of Energy appeared before the Standing Committee on Estimates for the purpose of answering questions regarding the 2012-13 estimates of the Ministry of Energy. And while the minister answered questions relating to a number of issues, the committee members from the official opposition spent considerable time asking the minister questions relating to the two gas plants, which were to have been built in Oakville and Mississauga, respectively.

I think we should all acknowledge, as the Auditor General himself did, that it was a very difficult position for the Minister of Energy. The overwhelming majority of the questions asked by the committee related specifically to the ongoing outstanding legal proceedings and confidential negotiations. The Minister of Energy attempted to strike an effective balance between the committee's authority to ask those questions and request those documents and the need to protect the public interest in the midst of highly sensitive commercial negotiations and litigation. He has a responsibility as minister of the crown, and it is different from the responsibilities that we have as members.

The Chair of the committee, the member for Beaches-East York, recognized the precarious situation of the Minister of Energy. In fact, he repeatedly ruled that, while committee members were permitted to ask such questions, the minister was able to exercise his discretion and respond to such questions in a manner that protected the interests of the province.

Mr. Prue, on May 16, as Chair of this committee, is quoted in Hansard as saying: "The minister has the right to decline either giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during his answering of the questions."

And further on that day, Mr. Prue said, "I would advise that I'm going to allow the motion to proceed, but I would also advise—and I think the minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and I would expect him to do so. That would be my ruling."

The minister relied on the Chair's repeated statements and rulings that the minister was permitted to respond to questions and document requests from committee members in a manner that protected the interests of the province. As a result, the minister wrote to the committee on May 30 and advised the committee that he was exercising his discretion and would not be able to produce the re-

quested documentation as they were confidential, subject to solicitor-client privilege, litigation privilege or highly commercially sensitive.

Unfortunately, the official opposition ignored these flags that were raised by the minister. They showed no restraint, and on June 5, the member from Cambridge moved a motion to report to the House the minister's failure to produce all responsive records pursuant to the motion of May 16 and to kick-start these contempt proceedings.

The official opposition and the third party have attempted to vilify the Minister of Energy, and they have implied that the minister hid or concealed these records. This is simply not true; let's deal with the facts. The record shows that the Minister of Energy, at all times, was trying to balance two important yet competing public interests: the supremacy of Parliament versus protecting the taxpayers' interests. I think the proof, as I've already alluded to, is shown, because on July 10, when the minister announced that the OPA had reached an agreement with Greenfield to relocate the Mississauga facility and that the government had accepted the OPA's recommendation to relocate the Mississauga facility to the Lambton station in Sarnia, he released the documents. In fact, he directed his ministry to provide the committee with all correspondence relating to the Mississauga facility that was responsive to the motion of May 16, except for records that were subject to solicitor-client privilege, and these documents were provided to the committee. He was not trying to hide or conceal anything.

Now, we know that on September 13 of this year, the Speaker ruled that while a *prima facie* breach of privilege had been established, he would set the matter aside and ask the three House leaders to take it upon themselves to find a path that can satisfy the request of the estimates committee. I think this was a highly appropriate ruling. The minister himself clearly said he respected the ruling, and in a minority Parliament, it's very appropriate that the three House leaders should meet and try to resolve the issue.

The Speaker clearly recognized that there were two competing public interests at play: the interests of the committee in exercising its parliamentary privileges, and the interests of the Minister of Energy in temporarily refraining from the disclosure of sensitive information in the midst of commercial negotiations and related proceedings. There was an opportunity for the three parties, through frank communication, to settle the matter in a way that satisfied the request of the estimates committee. The Speaker's ruling clearly laid out that this was a unique situation, unlike other cases of privilege, that warranted a unique solution.

What happened since September 13? The House leaders met on four separate occasions to determine whether a solution could be found. On this side of the House, we had high hopes that the parties would ultimately reach a solution that struck a balance between the competing public interests identified in the Speaker's ruling. The

government tabled two separate proposals that would have facilitated the public release of the records, while accommodating the government's concern about the ongoing commercial negotiations and related proceedings. Unfortunately, these proposals were not received in any serious way by the opposition House leaders.

In fact, last Friday, I'm informed that when our House leader asked the other two House leaders to attend a meeting, they stayed less than five minutes. They basically threw in the towel and made it clear they were not interested in negotiating, so I find it extremely disappointing, as I said at the onset of my remarks, that the opposition decided on Friday to walk away from the negotiations. Instead of trying to find common ground, as the Speaker requested, they left and used the time to spin the media with inaccuracies.

After a weekend of long negotiations, difficult negotiations, it was very interesting to hear from the Ministry of Energy that finally there was a settlement in the Oakville case. Shortly after announcing the settlement of the Oakville matter, the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority released all 36,000 records that were responsive to the original motion of the estimates.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make sure everyone knows that the Minister of Energy has attested, as an honourable member of this House, that these are the full and complete records. I think that that should be respected. I would hope that each of us, when we make a statement of that significance, would be respected. Unfortunately, it appears not.

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Mr. Speaker, I'm so disappointed. This is about the politics of constant conflict, and we've seen this from the Ontario PC caucus over the past 12 months in this province. This is the party that opposed the first budget in the first minority government in years in Ontario. We question whether they even read it. This is the faction that voted to remove interest arbitration reforms from the budget, even though they had proposed these sorts of changes in their own platform, in Changebook. It's the party that rang bells, filibustered committees and blocked legislation for months in the spring session.

Why are we here? It's simple: The opposition is on a political witch hunt. I've known the Minister of Energy for 10 years, and he's a man of great integrity. He has served as Attorney General of this province for four years. He has been a well-respected and honourable member of this Legislature for nine years. Before he came to this place, he was a member of the Ontario bar of the highest standing and reputation for over 25 years. He opened community law clinics and taught law classes in his spare time. He has put the public interest first, as the deal reached clearly shows.

The Minister of Energy gives of his time, as we've heard, with his community activities. Just last week, he came to the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce for a breakfast meeting with that organization. The community of Whitchurch-Stouffville is very dedicated to sustainable energy policies, and there's a co-operative

group there that was extremely interested in hearing from the minister. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the minister spoke to that group for some 20 minutes and took a number of questions from members of the audience. I am still receiving emails from people in attendance at that meeting about how grateful they were for the clarity with which he explained Ontario's Green Energy Act—the value to Ontario, the jobs that it has created and the clean, sustainable source of power that we're putting in place that is exemplified, in fact, by the range of energy options that we have created in this province.

As I said before, the fact that we are here debating an amendment to an amendment on a motion by the member from Cambridge disappoints me. It's not what my constituents are expecting of the role I will and should be playing in this House. That role is to improve services and the quality of life of Ontarians, through thoughtfully considered government bills and through private members' public business. It is a duty I think that we all need to think about long and hard. Surely, there's some room for some frank discussion, some compromise, some idea of putting the people's interest first as opposed to the political vindictiveness that we see so often from the other side. It's not what I was elected to do, and I think the sooner we bring this matter to a conclusion, the better for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm grateful to be part of this historic debate that I believe is going to fundamentally shape the way our Parliament and our government's cabinet interact moving forward. I think that the previous speaker may be misinformed. It is within the people's interest that we have this debate. It is within the interest of the people of this province that we find out how much of their hard-earned tax dollars have been mismanaged.

I've been listening intently to my colleagues from all political parties during this unprecedented situation. I've also listened to my constituents and many members of the public. In fact, as the education critic, I've heard from many of those who are in teachers' unions, wondering why, at a time when they've been vilified by this Liberal government and asked to take a pay freeze—which we did support—they would actually have to watch this government effectively shred money.

It's very difficult for people in the public to understand why \$650 million and counting of their money has gone out the door, with little, if nothing, to show for it. And it is clear, Speaker, that without a doubt the cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville power plants has cost those Ontario families hundreds of millions of dollars. As I said, and as many of my Progressive Conservative colleagues have said, we are now estimating that this decision by the energy minister, the Liberal campaign team and the Premier has cost Ontario families \$640 million. This is money that my constituents and many members of the public say could have been spent elsewhere. They say it could have been spent on MRIs. They say it could have been spent on other ways to help

cancer patients. It could have been used in classrooms across Ontario. It could have been used for so many other reasons. But it is not, Speaker, because \$640 million is now going out the window for cancellation fees and projects that will never see fruition. Speaker, that is very, very serious.

It's also clear that in cancelling the power plants, particularly in Mississauga, those outside the traditional lines of decision-making in government—an unelected, unaccountable campaign team—made costly decisions for the people of our province.

Let's put this into perspective. People who work on campaigns are all tireless individuals; we all know that. We respect volunteerism, particularly on political campaigns throughout the political spectrum because those folks are hard to come by. They're diligent. They believe in something. However, they're not entrusted by people in this province to make those types of decisions, of cancelling a power plant.

First and foremost, that affects our energy grid. Secondly, it affects the money that people send to Queen's Park that they expect will be used in a responsible manner. They expect members of a cabinet, they expect members of the assembly, not members of a political campaign team, to make decisions about their money and power in this province. That in and of itself is a serious breach of trust, and if the member that just spoke from the Ontario Liberal Party cannot understand that, then maybe she should consider whether or not this place is her vocation or not. At the very end, Speaker, it is an inappropriate—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would suggest that we don't have any personal attacks on the member from—it was kind of a bit of a stretch, so I'd appreciate it if we would stick to the issue. Thank you.

Continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker.

Simply, this is an inappropriate way for government decisions to be made. It was a project that cost literally hundreds of millions of dollars. It was entrusted to this assembly, and by extension to that cabinet, by the people of Ontario, and it was sadly mismanaged. To make matters worse, the decision by the Liberal campaign team was made mere days before a provincial vote.

We have a right in this assembly to ask questions, demand documents, probe this situation. That is our responsibility in the official opposition. It is our responsibility to the people of Mississauga and Oakville and to the rest of the province to get to the bottom of whether or not this was a vote-buying scheme. We have an obligation to the people of Ontario to protect their money. We have an obligation to talk about this government's energy policy.

Now, when members of this assembly, most notably my colleague from Cambridge, Dr. Leone, sought information and sought answers from this government and its new minister on why the Liberal campaign team was quite frankly given extraordinary and exceptional powers over our electricity system, regardless of its cost to tax-

payers, we rightly felt obstructed when that information was not given to us. We rightly felt, in the official opposition and I believe in the third party, obstructed, Speaker. We felt we were being denied relevant information for us to do our job. After all, we are in the opposition to keep an eye on the government. That is why we are here. I hate to break it to members of the government, but sadly, Speaker, I think after nine years in office, they have forgotten why they're there and why we're here, and that is a sad testament.

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That brings us to this point. We arrived at this point because the energy minister refused to adhere to the responsibilities that he was given, through the cabinet, to this assembly. He has a responsibility to give us information when it is requested through the committee structure. The Minister of Energy—and I want to make this very abundantly clear to members of the Liberal government—had a choice. He had a choice he could have made.

Chris Bentley could have shared those documents requested by Dr. Leone and others at the standing committee on estimates or what he ultimately chose to do, which was refuse to hand over the documents and inhibit the committee's work, as well as members outside of that committee to do the work that they are expected to do and get to the bottom of this multi-million-dollar scandal.

Speaker, again, he had a choice. He could have done the right thing, the honourable thing, what was expected of him at the estimates committee, and handed over those documents to Dr. Leone. He chose not to do that. This is not the opposition's fault. It is the government's fault. It is the Minister of Energy's fault. He chose to do that. He made the decision. He should be smarter than that. But he chose to do that, and we were left with whatever options we have in the opposition to get the information that we require.

Had the minister made a better decision—and I have a seven-year-old. I know all about talking to children about good decisions and bad decisions, like taking a pair of scissors to school, and when your friend says, "I want to have a fashion show; can we cut up the dress?"—that's a bad decision when your child decides to do that. Trust me; I know. That's a bad decision. I know what bad decisions are.

I hate to have to talk to the Minister of Energy as if he is my seven-year-old child. However, similar to taking the scissors to school to cut the little girl's dress because they think it's a fashion show, his decision on the Mississauga power plant, and then to conceal the information that we requested, was a bad decision.

He had a choice. He had a choice, and it was a clear one. He could have made a better decision and he would not have been in this spot. We would not be undertaking an unprecedented step today had he made a better choice. He would not have been found in a *prima facie* breach by the Speaker of the assembly had he made a better choice.

But we are here, because the rules of this assembly allow that. The rules in this assembly have been created

to protect the opposition, the minority, from the tyranny of the majority, so that we are having abilities to protect our right to speak in this assembly, to ask questions in this assembly, to gather information in this assembly. After all, that is why we have been sent here. There is only one person who can be blamed for bringing us here to this day, to this contempt motion, and that, Speaker, is the Minister of Energy himself.

I've listened, as I said, intently to the debate. Members of all three political parties have had their opportunity to voice their displeasure with this unprecedented situation. I listened, for example, to the remarks of the government House leader, he of the now-famous quip that the Ontario Legislative Assembly is a kangaroo court. I think that is probably the saddest commentary I've heard since being elected here, that the government's own House leader would resort to calling a duly elected assembly a kangaroo court. Speaker, he should apologize to every member of this assembly for that transgression. He should be held accountable for saying that.

That was the same member, Speaker, who said that there have been no redactions; there has been nothing hidden—no omissions. My staff member Justin Ferguson spent the last three days with another group of staffers from the Progressive Conservative caucus. I want to thank every single member of the Ontario PC caucus staff team who went through those 36,000 documents. They have been here 24 hours a day, the last three days, and you know what? Of just but two documents that I was given this morning are pages that say, "18 pages redacted, not relevant; 31 pages redacted, not relevant."

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's just two documents.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That's just two documents of how many pages that have been redacted in over 36,000 documents. And that government House leader has the audacity to stand in this place, call us a kangaroo court and then lie to us and tell us that those documents were not redacted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean—Nepean will withdraw that word.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, Speaker, withdrawn.

But, Speaker, I also concentrated on the remarks by the Attorney General, the successor to the Minister of Energy. He wants this whole distasteful mess to just go away. He just wants to go to sleep tonight, wake up tomorrow and talk about some fluffy, happy thing—maybe it's about wind turbines on Wolfe Island; I don't know. But that's what he chose to do and I think that's really nice.

I think that's really simplistic and I think that's incredibly naive, because as I have said, his predecessor had a choice, a very clear choice: It was hand over the documents or obstruct and stall. He chose the latter; he made a choice. We're here because of your colleague's choice.

Now I agree that every member here comes to this place for the same reason: We want to do well for the people of Ontario; we want to put them first. We may have different ideas on what that is and how to make life

here in Ontario better, but at the end of the day, right from wrong is pretty damn clear.

He had a choice: Hand over the documents or obstruct. He chose obstruction, and as much as I wish the Minister of Energy and the Attorney General well in their life outside of this place, and even inside of this place, I must say it's incredibly naive to think that we can gloss over this historic breach of parliamentary trust. We can't just do that because you want to; we are obligated to have those fulsome debates.

I also listened to the Minister of the Environment. He was interesting because he decided to spend a lot of time name-dropping Conservatives, and he also name-dropped a lot of New Democrats, to be fair. He said, "Oh, my goodness, these Conservatives would just be so upset that today's Conservatives will be doing this." I can tell you, I was sitting in a caucus meeting yesterday when one of the name-dropped Conservatives he was talking about sent another one of my colleagues a note and said, "You know what? We should not only have these guys in contempt, but we should have a confidence motion and boot them out."

I've got to tell you that the Conservative family in Ontario has never been more united. The Conservative family in Ontario is ready to govern this province. The Conservative family in this province would never do what this government did and sacrifice \$650 million of taxpayer money for what you've done and put our energy grid in Ontario at the brink. You have put more politics into our power system than any government in previous incarnations.

So to the Minister of Environment, who used to be a government House leader, I must say, I was never more displeased from hearing someone—who I consider a statesman in this House—want to gloss over a situation as serious as the one before us.

Let's put this, again, into perspective. It is a chaotic mess at their government's own doing. They did this; they had a choice. It was they who made the campaign decision to cancel the power plants. It was they who wasted \$650 million and counting on a politically motivated, election-driven decision. It was they who refused to hand over the documents to this assembly when those documents were requested. It was they who were found in breach of the rules when they refused to hand over the documents, and it was they who redacted, omitted and hid documents once the Speaker ordered that they comply.

Speaker, it is very clear we are here because of them. I showed you the pages that have been redacted, and I am reminded again of the words of the government House leader, who said to us that they weren't redacted. Well, they were; I know that he likes to play with the truth, but there you have it. After all, it is they—and I cannot say this enough—who are responsible for this contempt motion.

To the Attorney General's point again, we all want to do what's best for the province, but in this case, you and your government failed utterly and miserably.

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I cannot answer why the Minister of Energy, the Liberal campaign team or the Premier made the decisions that they did. I can speculate that it was more about winning seats in the GTA than it was about good energy policy here in Ontario. I can speculate that it was more about winning seats than it was about bringing affordable energy to the seniors in my riding, who are having a very difficult time paying for it. And I think it was more about winning seats in the Ontario Legislative Assembly than it was about their so-called pride-and-joy green energy program.

I cannot answer why the Minister of Energy and why the Premier and the Liberal campaign team chose to withhold documents from the Standing Committee on Estimates, but I can speculate, Speaker. I think it was because they didn't want to be caught mismanaging our energy system at the expense of about \$650 million, at a time when we're asking teachers and doctors and every other public servant to take a wage freeze, which we support. But my gosh, it's awfully hypocritical when you go out and—I'm going to send the Minister of Finance a shredder just so he can start shredding money—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member will withdraw that one word, please. It's unparliamentary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Speaker.

I can't answer why the Minister of Energy, the Liberal campaign team or the Premier thought it was a good idea to redact, omit and further hide additional documents after the Speaker's ruling. But again, I can speculate, and again that's why we're here.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Please do.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think they don't want to get caught, to the colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I think they want to contain this embarrassment.

You have to understand that, after nine years in office, this government has become incredibly entitled. They find the opposition and any stakeholders or communities that are opposed to their agenda as irritants. They're incredibly arrogant and incredibly entitled. That is why we have had to pursue this rare, unique and unmatched situation at the assembly. This hasn't been done in over a century, and it's for good reason, Speaker: because any responsible opposition, like the one Tim Hudak is leading in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, is going to take its time, do its due diligence and make sure that we get this right. This is an extraordinary measure because these are extraordinary times.

You cannot just take \$640 million and put it through a shredder and expect the people of Ontario to ignore that, and expect the people in the opposition to roll over. You can't expect that; these are too-important times. We have to get our economy back on track. We cannot afford to mismanage more money.

Speaker, at a time when we're assaulting rural communities, just like mine in North Gower, with wind turbine developments that aren't wanted, this government decides to play fast and loose with the facts on a major

power station in Mississauga and a major power station in Oakville.

Now, if we want to talk about people, like the previous speaker did from the Ontario Liberal Party, and putting people first, then she would understand that this decision by our caucus and the third party is an important one, because we have the right to get that information. We have the right to ask those questions. We have the right to speak on behalf of the people who feel so disenchanting by this government. Speaker, we're going to continue to do that.

I would expect after today that this Liberal government will hand over those redacted, omitted and hidden documents and give them to Dr. Leone's committee and send this immediately to the finance committee so that we can get to the bottom of it and find no more surprises, and know once and for all how much money they have wasted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: As I was reflecting on my remarks and what I was going to say about this last night, Speaker, it occurred to me that it has been almost nine years to the day since I was elected into this place. I would almost always start my remarks on whatever the issue may have been that we were debating by saying that I'm pleased to rise and offer my comments on whatever the issue may have been. I will tell you that I am not necessarily today pleased to rise and offer my comments, but I do feel, as a member who has been here for nine years representing my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, that it's almost incumbent upon me—and I would expect on other members in this place—to rise, even though I'm not pleased to do so. But it's almost incumbent upon all of us to rise and put our comments on the record on this particular issue. The reason I say that and phrase it that way is because I see this, and I don't—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe that the government gave you the courtesy of listening to you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm just coughing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm sure you're coughing. The rest of your party would want to listen to this serious issue, and I would appreciate a little decorum.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I thank you for that. I would ask maybe next time that it occurs if you could just ask to stop the clock.

As I've said, I feel it's incumbent upon all of us to put our remarks on the record on this particular issue. Now, the opposition—the Conservatives and the NDP—will not agree, but I see this issue as just completely one that is politically motivated. I know that they don't agree with that. They're on the record as saying they don't, but both the Conservatives and the NDP are engaged in concert, I would say, in an exercise that I see as completely politically motivated.

Sometimes, when you come into this place, this being one of those days—and I say this with some reluctance—

you have to sort of hold your nose and inject yourself into an issue that you would prefer not to. I thought, "Maybe I'll just stay away and not be bothered with this," but I don't think that we have that particular choice.

The member who spoke just before me, Speaker, talked about how the electricity system has become too political, in her words. I would love to just use my 20 minutes speaking about the Conservative record when they were in government and the electricity system in the province of Ontario. I would love to spend more time reminding people about how, in 2002 or 2003, their attempt at privatization led to disastrous outcomes, and how they artificially capped the price on everybody's bill that showed up at their door every day.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Stop the clock, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I believe that the motion before the House is a contempt motion, amended twice. There's an amendment and a sub-amendment. It is not about policies of a previous government or anything else. It's about a contempt motion directed at the Minister of Energy of this government. I would ask that the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan speak to that motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I appreciate the point of order, and it's duly noted. If I feel that the member has strayed too far, I'll certainly inform him. At this point, he's on the line.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker. As I mentioned, the member who spoke just before me referenced politically motivated electricity decisions, and that's why I would remind people only that they artificially capped the price of electricity in 2002 and 2003 because they didn't want to deal the issue of electricity pricing, and they were hiding the real price on people's tax bills and not allowing people to see the real price on their energy bills that came to their house. I could talk to that for a long, long time and would love to.

Speaker, this is, as I've said, nothing more, in my opinion, than a personal assault—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock again. The member from Renfrew, the member from Simcoe–Grey, if you want to talk out loud, I suggest you go outside, not here, not across the floor. Last warning.

Continue.

Mr. Bill Mauro: So as I've said, I see this as nothing more than a personal assault, which is why I feel it's necessary to speak today on the integrity and on the character of a member of our caucus who's been serving this place with distinction for over nine years. I see it as nothing more than that. It's unseemly, in my opinion. Quite frankly, I think it's distasteful.

We're not talking about education here. I've listened to the other members talk about what we could have done

with the money. I'd love to sit here and debate at length our record on education compared to the record on education—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan is drifting. Stay to the issue, and I won't stop the clock on that one.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker, but clearly they have raised the issues of education and health care in their remarks, and I would expect the same latitude to address it. We're a government that has hired 10,000 teachers, many of them new and young, newly graduated teachers—15,000 nurses. The list goes on. So we would love to have that debate at any time they'd like to and compare records.

Speaker, to be clear, this is a Conservative motion. They've brought it forward, but I want to address as well—I wasn't here yesterday when the NDP spoke to this, but I was told that the leader of the third party made a remark about them seeking the truth. I've noticed now that they are sitting down there, Speaker; they are not coming forward, I guess some attempt to stay above the fray on this contempt motion. But they clearly spoke to it, and I'm told the NDP leader said, "We're seeking the truth," which in my mind is a very clear and direct attack on the integrity of the member, saying the same thing, that what he's done to this point is not truthful and that it is not fully transparent. So, in my opinion, while they're attempting to stay above the fray—

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I will ask the member to sit down, and I will not stop the clock. In his reference to the third party, it's within their ability to say they want to seek the truth. It wasn't a personal attack on the member, as you stated. I'll ask you to withdraw that. Don't shrug your shoulders. Withdraw.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Withdraw.

Interjection: Thank you.

Mr. Bill Mauro: You're welcome.

Speaker, I'm going to read the motion, if I can, just so that people who are interested in the issue know what it says:

"That the matter of the Speaker's finding of a prima facie case of privilege, with respect to the production of documents by the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to the Standing Committee on Estimates, be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which is hereby reconstituted as it existed on September 9, 2012; and

"That the committee shall be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair, and shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012."

And I understand now that one of the amendments is changing the date on that, I think, to November 23. So let's sum up what they are suggesting and saying.

They are saying that at committee, the Standing Committee on Estimates, when they requested documents, they were not submitted to the committee in a timely manner. They are completely ignoring a ruling of the Chair, the NDP member who was the Chair of the Stand-

ing Committee on Estimates; they are completely ignoring the ruling of the Speaker that very clearly articulated that there are two very obvious and apparent competing interests here and that the minister was completely within his rights and his obligations on behalf of all of the people in the province of Ontario in the way in which he addressed the issue.

Now, Speaker, I'm going to read for you—I've got four minutes before we break here, but I want to read for you what the Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates said in terms of the release of the documents—the timely release, or the release at all, of some of the information contained in there. This is what Michael Prue, the NDP member from Beaches—East York, who is the Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates, said on May 16.

He said two things. He said the minister has the right to decline either giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during his answering of the questions. On its face, that doesn't mean a lot until you hear the second part, which explains why he ruled that way.

Here's what Mr. Prue, the Chair, said: "I would advise that I'm going to allow the motion to proceed, but I would also advise—and I think the minister," that being the Minister of Energy, "being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and," further, he goes on to say, "I would expect him to do so. That would be my ruling."

So, Speaker, clearly the Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates, as well as the Speaker, has acknowledged that there are two very clear competing interests here when it came to the submission of the documents at any point. Everybody gets it.

Now, here's where we find ourselves. The minister subsequently has released and provided all of the documents, 36,000 pages, so here's where we get to the point. Some of them have talked a bit about pieces being redacted. Speaker, my goodness. Commercially sensitive information should be released? Solicitor-client privilege should be released? That's what they're saying. I would find it interesting if members of the press gallery were here, and maybe next time we'll see some motion from one of the parties opposite that's going to say that the press gallery, when they do a story, are going to have to reveal their source to us. I don't know where this goes.

Everybody understands that there are reasons for keeping some of that information away from public scrutiny. Everybody gets it. Here's what I would say if you want to solve it: Step outside the legislative chamber, a member of either party, and make these same allegations outside of the confines of this chamber. Step outside and say that the Minister of Energy has not released all of the documents, when he says very clearly that he has. Step outside of the legislative chamber and say that he hasn't done it. Not only has he done it, but he's gone further than that. Not required, he has provided a personal attestation to the fact that he has released all of the documents that were required. He's done that. He's done that.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Well, do it. We'll look forward to it. We've given the example of the press gallery—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I thank the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan. He will continue when this starts again at 10:30; he has the floor.

This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan has the floor.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to continue today, Speaker, with my—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Forgive me; I have a point of order. The member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I know all members will be very excited to see that Jean-Marc Lalonde, from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, is here. I just want to say a quick hello to the former member.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess I'm supposed to say that that's not a point of order, but I would be remiss in saying the Speaker always acknowledges former members. We do thank the member for bringing that to our attention.

The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan will have a few extra seconds to compensate for that wonderful introduction of Jean-Marc Lalonde.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to continue my remarks. I think where I left off before the break was that, in fact, the 36,000 pages, all of the documents, have been delivered, which leads us to the obvious question: Why continue with the motion? If the minister, with a personal attestation, has delivered 36,000 documents, which he says is all of the documents that were requested and delivered, why, then, go forward with the contempt motion? Because, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, it is nothing more than a personal assault and pure politics. It's a Conservative motion, supported by the NDP; it's nothing more than personal.

I also think it's important for people that are interested in this particular motion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's better.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I think it's also important to let people know, who may be interested—I don't know how many really are. None of the press gallery is here. I don't know how many people watching this on television are truly interested in this personal, personally motivated motion. But what it has meant is the entire House—it's important for people to know the entire House has basically been shut down. No government legislation is being introduced or debated. No private members' legislation can come forward. I know that all members here, all 107, short of cabinet, take great pride in being able to introduce private members' bills on behalf of their constituents or on behalf of the entire province of Ontario. No committee work is going forward—all shut down for what? Completely—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew is warned—one and only.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, the member from Renfrew was warned before you were here. Now we've got a new Speaker and he's been warned again. He's getting multiple warnings. But anyway, that's all fine.

No committees, no private members' bills, no government legislation: This particular motion has shut everything down. It's important that we share with people how long this contempt motion can actually shut this place down, because this motion allows all 107 members of the Legislature to speak for 20 minutes each on this particular motion—20 minutes each. Each amendment allows each of 107 members to speak for 20 minutes. There have been two such amendments. Two amendments times 20 minutes each is 40, plus 20 minutes each on the original motion.

That means that all 107 members of this Legislature can now speak for one hour each on this particular motion. That's 107 hours of debate that's allowed on this particular motion to go forward. What that means is 107 hours where we won't be talking about government legislation, where we won't be able to pass our home renovation tax credits to annually give \$1,500 maximum relief to seniors. None of that work can go forward.

Now, that assumes, of course—and I know members won't like to hear this—that there are no further amendments put on the floor. Any member at any time can put another amendment on the floor, so each time there's another amendment, another 20 minutes is allowed per 107 members of the Legislature. Clearly we're in a situation here where the Legislature has been shut down. No relevant debate is going to take course on anything but this particular motion. It's important for people who are interested in this to understand that.

Here's where I go with that, and I want people in my riding to know that: 107 hours and growing. I'm going to make a prediction. I'm going to make a prediction today that at some point—what's today? Today is September 26. I'm predicting that somewhere along the line here—I think it's going to be the Conservatives but it might be the NDP; I'm not sure—before 107 hours of debate has transpired, one of them is going to stand and invoke a closure motion. It's just a prediction. They're going to invoke a closure motion, non-debatable. Nobody will get to debate the closure motion. That will, at some point, end this, because I think they're going to come to the conclusion that enough is enough. I think they're going to do that.

What it will mean is that when they do it, it will mean that they themselves are shutting down debate on a motion that they brought into this Legislative Assembly, because I think at some point the light is going to go on for the opposition parties that they probably feel, "Okay, the jig is up. We've exacted what we've attempted to do," and what they've attempted to do is nothing more than take a pound of flesh, publicly, in a very public way, in a very personal way, from an individual member of this Legislature. Today is September 26; that's my prediction—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Standing order 23(i) prohibits a member from impugning the motives of another member of this House. What I just heard from the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan does exactly that. I would ask him to withdraw that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've been doing my utmost to listen carefully, over some volume, and I personally did not hear unparliamentary language and impugning motive, but I take the member's concern seriously and I will listen intently to ensure that it does not take place.

I would also ask again, while I'm speaking, that people do not speak and that we bring the tone down. I'd appreciate that.

Member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker. I want to congratulate the member for that interjection. He managed to stand in front of the cameras and get it all out without smiling. I'm not sure how he did it, but he managed to do that. I can't stand and respond to it without smiling, because it was very interesting.

Anyway, I want to recapture: That's my prediction. At some point, one of the Conservatives, maybe an NDP but—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are people I'd like to rein in, and if they would actually self-discipline themselves, we wouldn't have this problem—including those who are not in their seats.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I'll just recapture—I've only got a couple of minutes left—what I think is going to happen here on this debate. At some point, the opposition, likely the Conservatives—maybe the NDP, but likely the Conservatives—will invoke a closure motion to limit debate. It's a non-debatable motion. They will invoke it to limit debate on their own motion that they've brought into this House, because at some point I think they're going to come to the conclusion that they can't do anymore. They can't exact a pound of flesh from an individual member more than they already have. The point will have been made. It may be the wrong point to try and make. That's just my prediction. It's September 26. I hope I'm wrong. We'll see where this goes, because on our side of the House, as I've said at the beginning of my remarks, I think it's incumbent upon individual members to rise and speak to this. I've got 20 minutes on the amendments. I've got 20 minutes on the sub-amendment. We've got 20 minutes on the original motion. If there are further amendments, all 107 are allowed another 20 minutes, so there's much to do.

This is really a serious issue. This is very, very serious. There will be casualties. There will be casualties as a result of this approach, but personally I don't think it's going to be the casualties that the opposition members may have expected. I think what you're going to see is a bit of a recoil from members of the public, those who

may be following this—and I'm not really sure how many are, but for those who are, I think there will be a bit of a recoil. My goodness, they'll look at this and think, "Boy, what are these people doing to each other? What's the cause? Why would they do it? What's the result?"

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If anybody is out there watching this debate, you would have to think that anybody who is seriously considering running for political office, whether it's at the municipal level, whether it's at the provincial level, whether it's at the federal level, whether it's as a public school board trustee—you'd have to think that anybody who's giving any consideration to that, who is following this debate with any closeness, and I don't believe too many are, would have to probably step back, pause and give some consideration or reconsideration to whether or not they really want to go forward with this, because the way that people in this chamber are treating each other, since I arrived here in 2003, is not getting any better.

Mr. Grant Crack: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci, monsieur le Président. C'est une grande journée pour moi aujourd'hui. C'est Glengarry–Prescott–Russell day. I'm very, very pleased to have six of the mayors and a number of members of council and other members from my riding here to witness a historic event here at Queen's Park. I'd like to welcome them all up here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order. Indeed, it is not a point of order. I know that we do recognize our guests—except under these circumstances, we're not doing introduction of guests. Since that wasn't a point of order, they weren't introduced.

It is now time for further debate. The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to lend my voice, as the MPP for Niagara West–Glanbrook and the proud leader of the Ontario PC Party, about the breach-of-privilege motion that stands before the House today.

I want to begin by saying how utterly regretful it is that we have had to come to this point, to the point where a minister of the crown, somebody entrusted with billions of dollars of investments and taxpayers' money, is on the verge potentially of being found in contempt of the very Ontario Legislature that he is here to serve, in contempt of his colleagues in his own party and the parties on the other side of the House, and thereby in contempt of hard-working taxpayers across this province.

It has not been, as I understand, since 1908—104 years ago—that we've come this close to finding someone, let alone the energy minister, in contempt of the Ontario Legislature. It should never have come to this, but it has. Taxpayers have been ripped off, potentially to the tune of \$650 million. Documents have been buried, hidden from MPPs.

I know it has got to be a concern for the energy minister's colleagues—their privileges were abused, just

as they were for Mr. Leone, the member for Cambridge, or any of us in the Legislature—that documents were hidden from view. And it's an ongoing concern: They continue to be hidden from view.

I won't apologize for this for one minute, that the Ontario PCs are going to stand up for taxpayers, stand up for MPPs, and say, "No more."

The sad thing is, it's the Premier himself, his energy minister and his cabinet colleagues who are the authors of their own misfortunes, the indirect authors of the motion before the Legislature today—an extremely serious motion. It's their actions, their choices and their ongoing deliberate decisions that have created this mess: a mess in the assembly, a mess for taxpayers, and a huge cost—again, up to \$650 million that ordinary families and businesses are going to have to shoulder for decades to come.

Quite frankly, Speaker, listening to the debate across the way, they can't blame the power plant fiasco, they can't blame the jobs crisis, they can't blame the debt crisis—they can't blame anybody but themselves that we've come to this point.

Today's motion isn't simply about the government squandering hundreds of millions of dollars—although that is an important point—of burying information and hiding the truth to save seats to maintain a loose grip on power. But importantly, too, as we consider the motion standing in the name of the member for Cambridge—this contempt motion before the House, based on the actions of the energy minister, the Premier, the Liberal campaign, is signalling to job creators, to investors, that the current government of Ontario is entirely incapable of being entrusted to manage complex files like the province's \$15-billion energy sector. While they were busy burying documents, trying to save Liberal seats, that meant that they spent time on these distractions and not on the basics of providing reliable, affordable energy and ensuring we can create jobs in the province of Ontario.

There are many costs to the actions of the minister being framed by the contempt motion today. But let's not forget the cost to ordinary, hard-working families, the 600,000 women and men who woke up this morning with no job to go to, who have seen their energy bills soar, who have seen companies vacate this province, because they took their eye off the ball to provide reliable and affordable energy to the province of Ontario and to fuel our economy. So they seemed try every measure they were able to discover of keeping documents away from the MPPs on the committee, of keeping documents from you, Speaker, and members of the assembly. While the Ontario Liberals were focused on their own jobs, they forgot about the jobs of millions of Ontario men and women today, who can't fathom that up to \$650 million has been blown to save Liberal seats. It is going to cost us jobs and drive up hydro bills for average, hard-working families.

While the government was more concerned about digging a hole to bury documents and stalling on information about who made the order, why they made the

decision and the true costs of cancelling the power plants in Oakville and Mississauga, tens of thousands of Ontario men and women lost their jobs. Hundreds of thousands more have sent out their resumés every day, over and over again, knocked on doors—can't find a job in this stalled economy. One of the drivers is runaway energy prices, and a signal to job creators and investors—businesses today—that these guys can't run the show. They can't handle their internal squabble and they can't look out for a \$15-billion energy sector that is a prime driver of our economy.

For the Ontario PCs, everything starts with creating good private sector jobs. Unfortunately, as the motion before us speaks to, the same can't be said for many of the members opposite. This is Ontario, where energy supply has always been a strength; it's been a competitive advantage. For 100 years, we had lower energy costs than competing states and provinces. That made beautiful cities like Brantford—where I come from—Niagara, Hamilton, the manufacturing heartland not just of Canada but of North America. This was an incredible strength. With these types of ad hoc decisions made on the spur of the moment to cancel power plants for short-term communications advantages, they've now saddled us with among the highest rates for job creators in Canada and North America. We're on a path to having the most expensive energy of any state or province.

This is the tragedy: that they have turned what has been an historic strength for our great province into a major shortcoming. Now we see with the conduct—just trying to get some basic documents about how they arrived at these decisions—they have completely politicized the energy process. They put Liberal seats ahead of jobs for regular, hard-working Ontario families.

So do you want to know why we're bringing this forward, Speaker? Well, we're standing up for hard-working taxpayers. We're standing up for the rights of MPPs to do the job that they've been entrusted with; for the people of the province of Ontario, the voters, to bear scrutiny on the government's decisions—and that's of all parties. It's incumbent upon the Liberal members, too, to hold their ministers to account.

1050

And then, when a committee of the Legislature votes to see these documents, to see them try to bury them, and still we have—what?—2,000 documents that have been obscured—I guess the technical term is “redacted,” basically hidden from view. Hopefully, in the time this debate takes place, those documents will be forthcoming. The House leader, I did hear, said that they're going to make all the documents available. About 2,000 have not been available yet, so hopefully we will pursue that.

Let me address another important aspect of this, too. As this very motion was being prepared by Mr. Leone in the event that the Speaker's order was not followed, the energy minister made an announcement that seems to reflect the type of thinking that resulted in the Mississauga and Oakville cancellations at the cost of \$640 million. The minister announced a new deal with Trans-

Canada to build a plant in Lennox and then, I guess, to ship the energy, to transmit it, from eastern Ontario to the southwestern GTA. I have concerns that some of the elements behind this motion—about short-term communications, political interests ahead of economic interests, the interests of taxpayers or those of MPPs—are reflected in that decision as well.

Between Oakville and Mississauga and the Lennox plant, we already have the Pickering nuclear generating station, we have the Darlington station, let alone the Lennox generating station itself, which is Canada's largest oil- and gas-fuelled electricity generating station, and, I know from the comments of the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke this morning, a tremendously underutilized station as well. If it was indeed in the best interests of taxpayers to send the hydro from eastern Ontario to Mississauga and Oakville, through all those current generating stations, why then not use the capacity of the Lennox generating station to produce that power instead of this deal, Speaker?

Why Lennox? It's an important question. This Premier, his minister, his campaign team did not even attempt to explain. This motion, then, would give the finance committee the availability, the opportunity to ask those questions on behalf of taxpayers as well.

Sadly, a cynical pre-election seat-saver had nothing to do with delivering reliable, affordable power to the people of the province, which is one of the most important points in governing and one of the most important jobs of the energy minister, who chose to bury documents instead of taking on that important duty.

Sadly, in the procedures we've seen that we're debating in the Legislature today, the documents that have come before the House as a result of the contempt motion coming from the committee, this government's decisions have turned natural gas into a four-letter word. This is an important supply of power in our province. It has enormous potential. We see what can happen in the shale gas not too far from our borders, beyond Lake Erie, and this government's political decision-making has turned natural gas into a dirty word. We disagree.

The \$640 million, \$645 million, \$650 million, whatever—when we get all the documents we'll find out exactly what it is, but between \$640 million and \$650 million—could have built two Highway 7s. It could have extended subways here in the city of Toronto. It could have built hospitals, like those in West Lincoln, in Cambridge and other parts of the province.

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Fergus, Milton.

Not only have they abrogated the rights of members to see documents, even in their own party, not only do they continue that by trying to bury documents—it still happens today with 2,000 unavailable documents. The complete waste of \$640 million that they could have invested in subways, in hospitals, in MRI machines and in our highways to move our economy forward is an incredible tragedy.

In addition, a very good reason why this debate should continue in the finance committee for further investiga-

tion: Confidence in investment in this province of Ontario is on the line. Why would somebody who can invest in another state or province invest in Ontario if they think that big decisions like these hydro plants are made by campaign teams, are made on the whim of the Premier, if they think they can change, after six years of heading in one direction, to the opposite six days before an election, or whatever it was? What does that do for investment in our province? What does it do for the long-term job creation picture? The economic vitality of our province is on the line. That's why this is so important.

Our commitment to holding this government accountable over its mismanagement of the energy file is evident by the fact that our inaugural Paths to Prosperity white paper, the very first one, was about affordable energy, ideas to keep prices under control for entrepreneurs, businesses, industry, households and taxpayers alike, to ensure a reliable, sustainable system that brings jobs back to the province of Ontario and so families can afford their bills.

Speaker, I commend the members in the PC caucus who have brought forward some very passionate, serious speeches here today on this historic debate. Former President Harry Truman once said: Don't give them hell; give them the truth, and they think that's hell. That's what it's all about.

The truth of the matter: Between \$640 million and \$650 million wasted to save Liberal seats; an ongoing attempt by the energy minister and those in the Premier's office to hide documents from MPPs of all parties; 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost and no sense of contrition, no apology from the government for this abuse of taxpayers' dollars. They shrug it off. They say, "Well, we got a few plans right; we got a few plans wrong." The incredible arrogance, the lack of contrition and the lack of understanding of the violation of the rights of MPPs and taxpayers and the impacts on the vitality of this great province of Ontario is beyond them. We'll stand up for it. We'll fight each and every day to say, "No more. It's time for a change in course."

We have tremendous potential in this province. We want to see that potential unleashed: a private sector economy that actually leads Canada again, world-leading, driven entrepreneurs, companies that I would have compete with anybody around the world and not lose a wink of sleep because I know that Ontario workers are among the most productive worldwide. They'll win every time.

I'm proud of the folks here in the assembly. I've known many in all three parties for many, many years. I know they've been sent here for the right purpose. I know where their hearts are, and I know in their gut, in their heart, they know the actions of the Premier are wrong, they know the actions of the energy minister are wrong, and they know a signal needs to be sent that we cannot conduct business in the province this way.

Speaker, throughout this debate and in the time forward, the Ontario PC Party will stand up for those taxpayers who are struggling, paying more and more and

seeing so much money wasted; taxpayers who believe, and families who believe, that better days are still yet ahead, that this great province of Ontario can actually lead again, that we will have a strong manufacturing sector, a strong resource sector, a strong services sector, that we can build this province and grow.

How do we do that, Speaker? We do that by making Ontario open for investment again, sending a signal of confidence, sending a signal that when someone is entrusted with the reins of a file as important as energy, a Premier who's supposed to watch over those files, that, first and foremost, it will be in the interests of bringing jobs to our province, in the interest of taxpayers in the province of Ontario, not the interests of the Ontario Liberal Party and the campaign team, but to actually make decisions on files like energy with a single focus of making Ontario grow and lead again, to bring jobs in our province.

Speaker, we don't apologize for standing up for those principles. We'll fight for those principles each and every day, principles that say energy policy should encourage investment into infrastructure, the best rates and the best quality for the families who have to pay the bills, a sensible energy policy that looks to the long term, that recognizes these investments, our infrastructure that lasts from 20 to 100 or more years, billions of dollars that require responsibility in judgment. A look to the long term: What will this mean for jobs? What will this mean for investment and the future vitality of our economy, not short-term political interests to advance the careers of some Liberal campaign team, no matter who they have to clear aside to get their way? An energy policy that's about affordability and reliability and that builds on strengths in our province in nuclear energy, in hydro-electricity, that builds on the potential of natural gas, but put in place in willing communities—sensible decisions for the long term, and not the short term, and an end to unfair, huge subsidies for feed-in tariff programs that are imposing projects on communities that don't even want them and are driving up prices to the taxpayer.

Affordable energy; lower taxes; a regulatory environment that says we'll get behind businesses to help them create jobs again and get out of their way; modernizing labour rules to bring them out of the 1940s and into the 21st century; infrastructure like subways—not ripping up roads—that will break gridlock and help people get to work and spend time with their families: That's what this is about, Speaker. Those are the principles ahead—and a government, sadly, that after nine years has lost its way, that sets all of these considerations aside for short-term decision-making based on communication advantage, coupled with trying to bury documents.

We are proud to stand up on behalf of taxpayers, stand up on behalf of MPPs, to say this: Put the documents on the floor. Let's move forward and let's build an energy system that will power jobs in our province of Ontario, not elect more Liberal members.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Further debate? The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member for—

Mr. Jim McDonell: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order: the member from Glengarry—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I just wanted to rise and to introduce my much older brother, who is in here with the mayors from Prescott, Russell and Glengarry today. I just want to welcome them to the House. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As the member may or may not have heard earlier, that indeed is not a point of order, but we definitely welcome your guests here, particularly your brother, and—stop the clock.

I also would thank all members for their patience during these particular moments under a very serious debate. I also remind the members that we've been relatively respectful and quiet during this debate. I expect it to stay that way, and I will act to make it that way.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, with new time.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite closed by saying, "We don't apologize." Maybe that's a very good place to begin. I don't think his party does apologize.

I've had to apologize in this House, unfortunately, because I did something thoughtless and careless. I retweeted something on a social media outlet, and I didn't read it properly, and I was out of town at the time. I apologized to the member, and I went over personally to the Leader of the Opposition, because I was wrong, and I apologized personally.

Having come from a minority who lost jobs, I'm a little more hypersensitive than some other people, maybe, than I should be, having lost jobs, having grown up in a country where being gay at 14 or 15 makes you a little sensitive. Sometimes I hear attitudes that I think are just poorly chosen words, opposite, about that.

When I watched the debate on Bill 13—well, I'll choose my words carefully here—it was clear that a lot of members opposite didn't have the kind of sensitivity to create the kinds of schools and safe places we did.

When I watched the member from Newmarket–Aurora launch a campaign on the McVety show—someone who has said things that destroy the self-esteem of many young people—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I don't use that language, even though I think people are wrong, because the language we use is important. It is important. While I may have profound disagreements, I may be uncomfortable with the language and attitudes about people like me—and some of the people that some of the members opposite associate with—I should treat you with respect.

I shouldn't allow you to live in a place where some human characteristic that you have means that you're implicitly thought lesser of because of some others.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You know, sir, I did not interrupt you, and I would like the same courtesy.

Many of us in this House come from a municipal background: Ottawa West–Nepean, Leeds–Grenville, Nipissing. One of the differences, and I think we should learn, and there's a lot of object lessons today for us here—the first thing I was taught by an older member of city council was, "Glen, whatever you do, no matter how passionate you get about something, you never ascribe motive to another city councillor or the mayor. Never assign motive or ascribe motive."

Part of that, in most legislative councils, is that we know each other. We know Chris Bentley as passionate, as someone who has devoted his entire life to law and justice and upholding the law: 25 years as a passionate lawyer, donating his time, working on civil litigation, working with folks as an Attorney General, as a Cambridge and University of Toronto educated professional. This man is everything that we aspire to be as MPPs. This is a man who has put in great sacrifice. We know this man is not contemptuous of this Parliament or the law.

It is in the knowing that all members here know each other. I've become quite good friends with the House leader of the New Democratic Party. I was up in his constituency; we know each other. Ms. Munro from York–Simcoe has become a personal friend; I know her to be a woman of extraordinary character. The reason that we have this extraordinary privilege in this House, to act almost with the weight of the law and a court on each other's reputations—the reason that we are called honourable members and we have this exceptional privilege is because we know each other.

In the same way that I was wrong and apologized, and I have now gotten to know the member opposite and have respect for him—because we now find out we have personal friends. His roommate is a great friend of mine who speaks very highly of him. He's a young gay man who talks very highly of his passion and his sensitivity, and I think it is in that knowing that we exercise these extraordinary privileges.

What I find so profoundly sad is that I'm part—let me just go back a second. Anne Swarbrick is a friend of mine; she never mentioned what Bob Nixon did. We all knew Anne Swarbrick. Anne Swarbrick left this place and went to run the Toronto Community Foundation. She continues her personal commitment to public service.

It is so that we treat each other honourably—we don't just assume innocence when the member for London West actually signs those documents and says, "I've given you everything. I've complied with the law." That is his personal integrity and honour.

We are asked, Mr. Speaker—and you are asked—to measure in the knowing, in the familiarity. In that knowing, we have to exercise extraordinary powers. I do not

believe that there is a single member opposite who actually believes that the member from London West is in contempt of anything. As a matter of fact, you know that when people pass on, we all stand up and pay tribute to them. When new members come in, as they often joke, having been a rather recently minted MPP, we all stand up and applaud for them. That is the tradition of the House that, in my mind, is on the line here.

We are held to a higher standard. We all know Mr. Bentley is an honourable man. He is a lawyer; he is a man who has taken great sacrifice. We know his wife, Wendy; we know the family. He has not done anything wrong. He has complied with the Speaker's order, and we know him to be of character. And that is the way. So, people—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Just following McGuinty's orders, I guess.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is saying he's following the Premier's orders. That is both insulting and offensive and is a great disservice to the seriousness of this process, especially coming from a member who blocked the Sergeant-at-Arms, undermined the authority of the Speaker with the member from Haldimand-Norfolk to block the proper execution and removal of the member—who truly was contemptuous of this House—from being removed under order of the Speaker. This is the man who is now lecturing Mr. Bentley and this party. I cannot ever imagine the member from—

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to ask the member to stay as focused as he can under the circumstances. I understand the to-and-fro and the emotions that are involved in this, but I'm going to ask all members to just tone it down and stay focused, please. Thank you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I think I'm very focused on it. The member for London West has always respected the Speaker, he has always respected the law, and because you know that, you have the responsibility to act responsibly.

Imagine your reputation. Imagine you were as honourable a man as Chris Bentley is, without the benefit of an impartial adjudicative body. This is no time for partisanship, because you have dropped the clothes of partnership and you have put on the cloak of judgment, and with that comes a much higher standard of responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, you know and I know there is not an iota of truth, there is no evidence base that Mr. Bentley, the member from London West, has done anything but uphold the law and, more than the law, the finest traditions of this House.

Can you imagine if we had held that same standard to the behaviour of some of the members opposite, who banged desks and disrupted and undermined us and the Speaker, who actually really interfered with the process of this House? We didn't. I'm very proud to be of the party of Dalton McGuinty and Bob Nixon.

I want to say something to my friend the House leader and my friend over in the New Democratic Party: I think this is something we share. I think of the tradition of Tommy Douglas and Stanley Knowles as great parliamentarians. If they were sitting in this House, they would not support this nonsense. They wouldn't. I appeal to your better nature to not descend into this kind of nonsense and character assassination where someone doesn't have the benefit of a lawyer, doesn't have the proper adjudication.

The members opposite spend a great deal of time intimidating in many ways, in my interpretation of it, by referring to the horrible consequences that they were prepared to bring down by abrogating and not upholding the proper traditional standards of this House and the treatment of them. Because the only thing that Mr. Bentley, the member for London West, has to fear is an inappropriate execution of a judicial process. We can debate power plants, we can debate financial policy, we can debate all kinds of things about whether governments did things that are right or we have good policy, but this isn't about that, and when you confuse that, you do a great disservice to this House. This is about someone's reputation, about their conduct as a member, about their conformity and respect for the law and the process.

I listened carefully to the member opposite, and I would make a personal appeal to him, because I do think he's a man of good character and I think he's a fair-minded person. I think if he was, upon reflection, asked, "Would you like to be like Mr. Hepburn from my own party, years ago, who rather knee-jerkily moved a motion of censure in this House which was successful and which hurt a member opposite? Do you really want to carry on and be the third in the tradition of Mr. Charlesworth, who wrote a personal letter to a member here and was called before the bar down here and humiliated as a journalist?"—that's Victorian. That's back with buggy whips and Jack the Ripper. This is something out of our past. We certainly have evolved, Mr. Speaker, to a higher standard of law and civility. We have human rights charters that—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was King Edward.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Sorry, King Edward and the Edwardian period. I have no doubt that I make mistakes sometimes. Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You know, I can tell my appeals to the better nature of my friends in the NDP obviously fell short if we're down to debating which king or queen was in charge at the time. It must be cold comfort to the member from London West, who knows how seriously his reputation is held by the members of the third party if that's their response to an appeal from me, who considers you a friend, to behave in an adjudicating way.

I don't think we understand the gravity of this. One of the things that we have as a great privilege in this House is that we can stand up and say anything about anyone

without fear of litigation, charge or court. We cannot be charged in civil court while we sit here. That is an extraordinary privilege. As a matter of fact, there are very few people, and almost no one in Ontario, who hold that kind of privilege.

I have to tell you, where this is going and where this House is descending to is deeply sad. I think it will give people of great character in public service, of Mr. Bentley's stature, great pause before they ever think about seeking elected office if their reputations are so easily open to being made fodder in a partisan political game. It is particularly sad, too.

Then we get into these, quite frankly, somewhat fallacious arguments around confidence. The Leader of the Opposition, the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, made the statement that somehow, you can measure the impacts of this by investor confidence, that money will run out of this province. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's true: Taxes are 18% lower than they were under the party opposite. Direct foreign investment: That money that he's talking about has actually got a measure; it's called direct foreign investment. It is at an all-time high. We are second only to California. We have passed Massachusetts, we have passed New York, and we have passed Illinois. We have passed all the other large-scale regional industrial service economies. We attract more private capital each and every month in this province than we ever have before.

So let's take his standard of capital investment as confidence in the competence of this government and the efforts of the member from London West, the Minister of Energy. By his own standard, the market continues to vote in favour of this government economically, because people put more capital here than anywhere else in North America save California. I'm happy to take all of these standards that they keep throwing out that have absolutely nothing to do with the matter—even the standards they throw at us that have absolutely nothing to do with the matter at hand.

It just saddens me. It saddens me because we are not just taxpayers, as the party opposite says. We are not just consumers; we are actually citizens, and we forget that. My grandmother would always get upset when people were referred to as taxpayers. She said, "I don't have a taxpayer certificate; I have Canadian citizenship. I came halfway around this world and I sacrificed a lot." She used to tell me about what it was like growing up in eastern Europe, where there was no organized government, where her brother and sister were killed because they were pressed into armies and where there was no civil authority, no reliable courts, no Legislatures and no justice. She said, "The taxes I pay"—and she paid taxes. She had nine kids. Her husband had a stroke. She was the only person raising them. She used to talk about the civility. When I chose to go into public service, she was really impressed. She said, "Our family for generations could never put someone in elected office because there was no office to elect anyone to." There were no courts. Then we pay a relatively small price. I am more affluent

than my grandmother's dreams. I have more money to spend. Every time my father used to complain about his taxes, my grandmother used to look at my father and say, "Ron, you are richer than anyone else ever in our family. You have health care, you have everything. Show a little bit of respect."

We are a generation that is so privileged, and we have such important challenges that should be occupying the House at this time. This is not, in my mind, what the people of Ontario want us to be doing. They want us to be working on the seniors' bill. They want us to be working on jobs. They want us to get back to work.

All of us are sent here. We have to make our case to tens of thousands of people—in my constituency, about 160,000. Our character is constantly being judged. I have gone through an election every year I have served in this House. If I can't pass the good-character test of my constituents, I don't have the privilege to serve here. Well, Mr. Bentley has passed that character test over and over again. Mr. Bentley, the member from London West, doesn't just represent Chris Bentley here; the member from London West represents a whole bunch of Londoners who see him as one of them, who sent him here to represent their character. Mr. Bentley has never done one thing to make them embarrassed or ashamed, and I wish we could all say that. I can't. But motives are important. All of us have family. All of us have been victims of horrible things said about us that we can never prove.

The member from Newmarket—Aurora was quite rightly offended, and I was really shocked when I saw a horrible letter circulated about him that was unsigned, that no one takes responsibility for, because how does he defend himself? If we don't have his back—and this party stood behind him and said that was wrong, I would like to know one day who did that, because he has a family, he has a reputation and he's a person of good character. He shouldn't have to put up with that, and we were all rightly outraged. So how do those same people play that kind of poker game with the member from London West's reputation? How do you do that and hold yourself to that standard?

It would be gracious if you did what was asked last Friday, which was to resolve this between the House leaders. That lasted five minutes. Mr. Speaker, we were asked, and you asked us as a government to try to work with those folks. We expected that was going to be hours of conversation. We didn't expect this was easy. This is difficult, one of the hardest things. All of us who have been mayors—the member from Nipissing, the member from Leeds—Grenville, the member from Kingston and the Islands, the member from Ottawa—Nepean—all know, those of us who have been in municipal politics, that you have these tensions. You want to tell the public everything. Having sold the hydro utility, I was constantly called on the carpet to tell all, but you've got to protect the value and assets of those utilities, which means you can't put proprietary information out there. These power bills were at the very centre of proprietary information.

The party opposite, when it privatized and deregulated power, dropped the value of the assets by several billion

dollars, which created a liability. So we don't have to take great lessons from them on protecting the value of public assets. That's obviously not a part of it. You have to be transparent. This is the people's money. This is the people's Legislature. It's not ours.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: They're all getting a bit chippy now.

My point was this, Mr. Speaker, my point was simply this: You made mistakes on hydro. Some of your hydro policies were colossal failures. We have made mistakes. Some of the things that we have done have been failures. You don't build a province on every success. You try things and they don't work out. So let's keep some perspective here, and a little humility. Why don't we try to behave to at least the standard of a small town council and not ascribe motives? If there isn't evidence of wrongdoing—and there really isn't evidence that there wasn't compliance with the Speaker's order or with the orders of the House.

It takes a huge amount of time to assemble 36,000 pages of documents that are legally sensitive. I have looked at them. I don't see a lot wanting. I don't see much substantive that's missing. Both the president and CEO of hydro and the minister have signed off on those. Unless we have evidence to the contrary, it is our responsibility to take their word as honourable people. Mr. Andersen and Mr. Bentley are honourable people. We should take their word. We always have. Why would we change that now? We have an opportunity to be better people here. We really do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, go ahead.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd just like to announce that I've got some clients here from the ODSP office, down from St. Thomas, who are here to see the minister and make a statement to the media. I've got Dave Kerr, Wendy LaFrance, and Richard Sitzes, and on top of that, other community volunteers and organizers here for the visit.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It being close to 11:30, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1124 to 1500.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, it's not often I would refer to the Toronto Star in my speeches in the Legislature, but I think it's appropriate that I begin with this quote from the editorial in the Toronto Star today: "Instead of trying to convince skeptical Ontarians that these decisions were mere 'missteps' and things aren't as bad as they seem, McGuinty and his energy minister ought to come clean and issue a frank apology for what is, at root, a political fiasco driven by electoral considerations."

Speaker, the issue before us is a very serious matter, and you ruled in your ruling on the point of privilege that was put forward by my colleague Mr. Leone that there is in fact a prima facie case of privilege.

Now, for the benefit of my constituents who have been following the debate here, I want to refocus this debate

and remind us all what this debate is about, because I heard from members of the government over the last two days references to intentions to impugn the personal integrity of the Minister of Energy, many suggestions that somehow, because we are raising this important point of privilege and pointing out what the implications are to our ability to do our work as members of the official opposition whose job it is to hold the government accountable—I want to make it very clear that no one in this place has even suggested that the personal character of the Minister of Energy should, in any way, be questioned. No one has questioned his past performance as Attorney General. No one has questioned his career as an attorney. We are here to speak to the point of privilege that you, sir, as the Speaker, ruled was in fact a legitimate point of privilege for the members of this House.

I want, for the record and for those who are observing this debate, to read your conclusion: "The Standing Committee on Estimates was unquestionably entitled to request the documents sought from the Minister of Energy, and in the end the minister had an obligation to comply with the committee's call for those documents. The committee did not accept the minister's reasons for withholding the documents and persisted in its demand during an extended period of time.

"I am therefore satisfied that a prima facie case of privilege has been established."

Speaker, we want to thank you for that ruling because at the heart is the ability of this chamber, the members of this Legislature, to do their job.

I want to also read into the record from O'Brien and Bosc, where there is a distinct differentiation between a point of privilege and contempt of the Legislature: "It is important to distinguish between a 'breach of privilege' and 'contempt of Parliament.' Any disregard of or attack on the rights, powers and immunities of the House and its members, either by an outside person or body, or by a member of the House, is referred to as a 'breach of privilege' and is punishable by the House. There are, however, other affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges. Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions."

Speaker, the reason we are debating today is not because of any individual's character or reputation; it is specifically because a committee of this Legislature attempted, for months, to get important documents that it felt were important to its work, and the Minister of Energy repeatedly refused to produce those documents. The committee relied on this House and the rules of procedure to have access to that and, unfortunately, that's what it took. We would not be here today if the Minister of Energy had simply complied with the request of that committee months ago and provided the documentation that involved a multi-billion-dollar transaction in this province. Multi-billions of dollars are at risk on the green energy policy of this government. The Minister of En-

ergy chose to hide, not to disclose, the documents. That's why we are here, and I want the people of this province to know that's why we are here.

For any member to stand in their place and suggest that somehow this is a personal attack shows, once again, what this government's focus is, and it's not transparency and it's not accountability; it is all about putting up a shield between what the public deserves to know and what it wants the public to know. What are they hiding? That's the question.

This is against the backdrop of a file I know quite well, and it's called Ornge. Speaker, for months we have been conducting hearings on the Ornge scandal in this province, and what has the government done? At every turn, we were obstructed from access to information. The minister repeatedly told us she didn't know anything about it, and yet eventually, after a great deal of effort, after demanding that documentation be produced for that committee, what did we find out? We found out the minister knew full well. There was document after document that disclosed that there were briefings of the minister, the Premier and staff from the top down to the bottom. And guess what the government did? They did nothing, and multi-millions of dollars were wasted in the health portfolio.

Now we have a very consistent demonstration of a minister of this government who, rather than be transparent and rather than work with the committee of this House, chose to use every excuse not to disclose that documentation. I repeat again, Speaker—and to those who are observing this debate, understand what members of this government are trying to do when they suggest that somehow we are disrespecting honourable members by simply following the rules—had the Minister of Energy produced the documents for the committee when they were asked for, we would not be here, and the Minister of Energy would not be facing the prospect of this House voting a contempt motion and declaring and demonstrating to this House that we, as elected representatives in the Parliament, representing our people, our voters, the taxpayers of this province—that they still have responsible people who will represent them and not take no for an answer from a government that wants to hide important information. It's about preserving the credibility and integrity of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—that's why we are debating this—not a personal attack against any individual member. It's about what the minister, in his capacity as Minister of Energy, chose to do, and that is to not disclose information.

I had a very interesting meeting with someone whom, over the years, I grew to respect highly. His name is Walter Kimmerle. He was the president and CEO of Berkim Construction. He was an individual who came to this country as an immigrant; chose Canada, as he told me, because of the prospects of a democracy that would be stable. From time to time he would call me, because we emigrated from the same country, his family and mine. He and my father were friends, and they would often talk about why they chose the difficult path to

immigrate to this country. They both knew what it was like to live under a government that was essentially a dictatorship and essentially held its citizens in contempt, and they made the decision to choose Canada and Ontario.

1510

Walter would often call me, and he'd want to talk politics. I'll never forget the last time I saw him—because he passed on at the age of 80 last April. The last meeting I had with him, he said, "Frank, I want to give you some advice. The next election you go into, your party should have as its motto 'Accountability and transparency for Ontario.' And I'll tell you why. The more I see what is happening, whether it's at a provincial level or whether it's at the federal level of government, the very institution that should be there to protect citizens is more interested in preserving its power rather than representing the people who have elected them. If that's the direction that we're going to go, Ontario and Canada will be no different than the country we left."

He said, "We're taking for granted that we have a parliamentary institution that has as its core the cornerstones, if democracy is to function effectively, of accountability and transparency."

Speaker, over the last number of months those words have become incredibly insightful. I think they're very, very relevant to this debate. I've heard a lot of talk about partisanship. It's interesting how, over the last number of months, every time we in opposition raise an issue about how the government is not doing its job or we expose a lack of oversight, we expose a lack of accountability, we challenge the opaqueness of how the government is doing its business, we are accused of partisanship. How many times have we heard the Premier stand in this place and say, "Well, in answer to the member, of course that's a partisan attack. We have the public interest at heart?"

I raised a point of privilege with you, Speaker; I don't think you agreed with me at that time, but maybe eventually, one of these days, you will on this issue, because I believe it is impugning motive to a member in this House when someone is allowed to stand in their place and say, "What you're saying is partisanship and what I'm doing is in the public interest." I still fail to understand how an honourable member is allowed to get away with that.

Look, all of us are here. We may not have the same political views, we may not have the same philosophical views, we may disagree on how we get from here to there or how we would serve the public interest, but because we disagree I don't believe gives anyone in this place the right to suggest that our motive is wrong. Our motive is what is in the best interest.

I will accept that the Premier and every member in the government has pure motive, but I will also reserve the right to disagree with how they get there, and I will also disagree, right to the last ounce of debate in this place, that what the Minister of Energy did for months on end by ignoring the will of the committee that was asking for information—I will disagree that the minister did the right thing and acted in the public interest. The public

interest is always based on accountability and transparency. The minute that any member of this House or any member of any government or any bureaucrat at any level of government chooses to suggest that the public is not mature enough to absorb the information that is all about them, we are on the brink of losing the very essence of what democracy should be: open and transparent and accountable. Government is there to serve the people. Government is not there to set its own standard of performance. We have a responsibility, the official opposition, to ensure that we can go back to our constituents and tell them what we did to hold the government accountable.

Speaker, I'm going to refer again to the Toronto Star. I think there has been an awakening at that place. It's either that or this government has gone so far in the wrong direction that even the Toronto Star has to say, "Enough is enough." I'm going to quote from today's article: "This is a dismal waste of money that could have been used to create jobs, increase assistance to the poorest, or help fund a much-needed expansion of affordable daycare for children or home care for the elderly," referring to the fact that this government has now wasted \$650 million on preserving two seats so that they could come close to a majority, and even that didn't help them, thank God.

The fact is that because the government, first of all, made the wrong decision—here's the point, Speaker. This goes beyond the current decision about the minister holding back information. We know why he was holding it back: because it's embarrassing. It's embarrassing to have to admit that the decision in the first place to put those plants in those neighbourhoods was fundamentally wrong. You couldn't justify it if you tried, but they did, at great expense.

The second decision that was wrong was to withhold information about the fact that it is going to cost taxpayers \$650 million without getting one—not even one—spark of energy out of that \$650 million. I have to go back to my constituents and have to explain to the parents of an autistic child why this government doesn't have enough money to ensure that their children can have the basics of an education so that they can learn how to eat and how to talk and how to walk. Not enough money for that, Speaker, but a lot of money to buy two seats so that two members of this Legislature can take their place.

I make absolutely no excuse for the fact that, yes, we're passionate about this. I believe the people across this province are passionate about it, too. I'll tell you what else I believe. I fundamentally believe, because I know the honourable members in this place, that every single member of the government who has stood up and has tried to make a lame excuse for what has gone on in the halls of this government—that they don't believe that. I believe that every member here wants to do the right thing. I believe they are embarrassed at the kind of decision-making that went on in this government. I believe they were even more embarrassed when my colleague Mr. Fedeli stood up here and started to show what

the disclosure was of the thousands of documents that finally were presented in the House, with everything that was relevant blacked out; sheets that talked about the memorandum of agreement blank.

Folks, we know you're embarrassed. You have to be. My suggestion is: Tear up those speaking notes, get up and talk from the heart, and let us know that you disagree as well. That's what your constituents are asking you to do. Your constituents are saying: "Stand up for us," not the minions in the leader's office or in the Premier's office. Do the right thing. That's all they're asking, for goodness' sake. It doesn't take anyone with a great deal of insight to realize what's going on here, and we're appealing to you. Speaker, we're appealing to this government to understand that the people of this province see through this charade, and we in the opposition parties have a responsibility to stand up for the hard-working people in this province and to stand up for democracy, accountability and transparency.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Speaker, I'd like to tell you a tale of two committees because, contrary to what most would assume from what they've heard in the House, estimates was not the only committee that was seized of this issue. In fact, public accounts also had a look at this issue. The difference with public accounts, which works with the Auditor General, is that we had the advantage of having the Auditor General sitting in the room advising us.

The motion that public accounts had before the House was "that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts immediately request that the Auditor General examine the contracts between the Ontario Power Authority and gas-fired plants proponents TransCanada Corp. (Oakville) and Greenfield South Power Corp./Eastern Power (Mississauga), focusing specifically on the potential cost to ratepayers of the government's 2010 and 2011 decisions to cancel the projects, and report back in a special report."

This was actually something that first came up at public accounts back, I believe, in March because at that point we did not yet have the special report of the auditor on Ornge, and that was before we became totally engrossed in Ornge. It came back for debate, this motion about whether to ask the auditor to do a special report, in September—on September 5, I believe.

When this motion was first tabled, if I recall, perhaps neither Mississauga nor Oakville had been resolved, but by the time we got to the majority of this discussion, Speaker, we were in the situation where Mississauga had been resolved in terms of how that was going to go forward with the relocation to Sarnia-Lambton, but Oakville was still under negotiation—under arbitration, in fact. So that's the situation we were dealing with.

In fact, what the auditor had indicated to us when we first discussed this motion back in March was that he was seized trying to complete the special report on Ornge and then getting geared up for his regular report, which will be tabled in December, and regardless of the outcome of

the motion, he really didn't have time to do a special audit. But he had indicated to us in late August or early September that, in fact, he probably did have a few weeks in which he could do a special audit if so directed by the committee.

That's the circumstance in which we were looking at this particular situation at the public accounts committee. But what was recognized by Madame Gélinas—sorry; I will keep saying that accidentally, Speaker, because that appears in Hansard, but I mean the member from Nickel Belt, representing the third party. The member from Nickel Belt recognized actually even in her opening remark on the motion that she understood that if sharing information was to have a negative impact, as in increasing the cost that the ratepayer would end up paying, "Then I will trust his"—that is, the Auditor General's—"judgment that he would let us know that and not share any information."

So we had quite an extensive—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It wasn't the Auditor General who redacted the pages, Liz.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Excuse me.

We had quite an extensive discussion that went on for quite a long time, and it went back and forth. At various points the Auditor General was asked to comment on what his position on this difficult issue would be. At one point, we were looking at an amendment about what documents the auditor could actually access, and then, having obtained access to the documents, what documents the Auditor General would actually disclose to the committee and then on to the public. I'm quoting here the Auditor General, Mr. McCarter: "On the Mississauga one where there has been a settlement, my sense is that we would get access to the documentation that we need, in order to be able to fulfill the intent of the committee's motion.

"My sense on the Oakville one, where it's currently in arbitration—and taking into consideration Madame Gélinas' comments about not disclosing any information—is that it could very well be that some of this information could be subject to client-solicitor privilege, or even if we were to get it, in my opinion, it could be damaging to the province's negotiating position.

"In either one of those situations I think that I"—this is the auditor speaking—"would basically—it might be a much shorter report relating to the Oakville one basically saying that here's sort of the state of the nation on this, but at the end of the day, all I can do is come up with a fairly broad range"—we had asked him about cost. "Because of these other factors, in my opinion"—and here's what's interesting; this is the auditor's opinion—"it's not appropriate either to divulge the information, or it's protected by client-solicitor privilege. That could very well be the end result."

That's what the auditor had to say in terms of this issue around Mississauga—"Okay, it's done; tell everybody everything"—versus Oakville, where there are, in fact, questions of solicitor-client privilege and risk to the integrity of the taxpayer; that is, we don't want to

damage the position of the government—of the taxpayer—at negotiation. That is what was said there.

We then got into a bit of a discussion—the member from Willowdale is not here at the moment; sorry, I can't say that; he just disappeared and traded chairs—around who actually was going to be able to decide what documents to release. We got into quite a discussion about who makes that decision. In the circumstance where the auditor was asked to do something, would it be the minister, would it be the courts, would it be the Auditor General? Who would ultimately have call on which documents should become part of the public venue and which not?

Again, as this discussion unfolded, the auditor, Mr. McCarter, commented—he's again talking about the Oakville situation—"I think there could be some of the documents or some of the information for which the Auditor General would have to use his or her professional judgment to make the call." Then he went on to say that he might conclude, "'No, I think they're just saying this because they don't want the information disclosed,' or 'I think what they're saying is reasonable. It could affect the province's negotiation position and therefore, in my opinion'"—that is, the auditor—"notwithstanding that I have right of access, I'm not prepared to disclose it."

So the auditor was looking at this and saying, "Yes, I have the right to see these papers"—in fact, he also said at various points that he expected that the ministry would give him access, because the auditor often sees privileged documents, learns what he may from the privileged documents and then doesn't publicly disclose them. It's often a situation the auditor is in that he has to make those sorts of judgment calls. But he again recognized that in the case of Oakville, there were some bona fide issues, as opposed to what and when it would be appropriate to disclose, because of the fact that the file was under negotiation.

Then, the member for Whitby—Oshawa—now we have a member of Her Majesty's Official Opposition weighing in on the issue—observed that the auditor "routinely looks at all documentation, not just contracts. We trust his judgment and ... if there are conflicts that arise in the course of examining the documents, whether they're privileged or not, the Auditor General will make his professional determination in that case, and we certainly are satisfied that he would exercise that judgment accordingly."

1530

Now, the reason I mention this is because, in fact, one of the suggestions that our House leader put forward when you, Speaker, suggested that the three House leaders should get together and find a mutually agreeable resolution to this was precisely that: that the Auditor General, who is in the habit of reviewing, and in fact is actively reviewing Mississauga anyway, be asked to look and decide what should be disclosed. Interestingly, when we were at public accounts, both other parties' representatives indicated that they trusted the Auditor General's

judgment with respect to precisely the same documents that are being requested in the case that we are debating this afternoon.

Last Friday it seems that the members opposite didn't think that the Auditor General could make that determination, but about a week ago before that they actually thought that he could be trusted to make that determination, so I'm not sure what intervened, other than perhaps we're talking to different members representing the opposition. Just wanting to be sure that we understood the auditor's position, I eventually asked him the question: given that Oakville is still under negotiation and that it would be the auditor's view—I think I'm paraphrasing you accurately, Jim, if I say—this time me—that it would not be your intent to interfere with negotiations over Oakville if that would interfere with the public interest. Is that fair? And the auditor said, "Yes, that would be fair to say." And I went on to indicate that we saw the Mississauga issue quite differently than the Oakville issue because in the Mississauga issue it had been resolved. We were quite prepared to see the documents disclosed; we were quite prepared to have the Auditor General go in and look. This was not the case with the Oakville plant, where the arbitrator was still involved.

There was quite an extensive conversation. We came back to the issue later that same afternoon on the 5th and got into a question of when would it be possible, if we did say to the auditor, "Go and do both jobs. Look at Mississauga; look at Oakville"—how would we want the auditor to behave if that were the case? Again, the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton indicated on behalf of the third party that with respect to Oakville, "we get updated with as much information as possible as soon as possible, even if"—and this is in quotes—the auditor would say, "It's in arbitration. We can't release very much information to you," but "we'd like to have whatever is possible as soon as possible," so an acceptance of the principle that what is not subject to solicitor-client privilege, what is not sensitive to negotiations, the auditor would report back on as quickly as possible, and other information, we'd have to ask him to revisit it later.

Interestingly, again, the member from Whitby-Oshawa seemed to agree with Mr. Singh's position that, in the case of Oakville, "we would understand." They would like the auditor to report back as quickly as possible, but they would understand that he might not be able to fully report because of the fact that this issue is under negotiation, under arbitration.

In the end, Speaker, what happened was that we eventually—

Interjection.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: No, I'm not. I am reporting on what happened at public accounts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I am simply giving us the record of what happened at public accounts.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, for the third time.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: What actually was finally the outcome was that there was a motion passed which said that the auditor would go in and have a look at the file on Mississauga, do a special audit, and I fully expect that when we have committees resuming we will have a motion that says there should be a special audit on Oakville as well.

The fact situation has changed in the last few weeks because we now have Oakville negotiations completed and the information is now available about Oakville, and we would have no concern that the auditor would now be able to go in and have a good, thorough look at Oakville as well as Mississauga.

The reason for which I raise all of this is, what we've got here is two committees that were looking at essentially the same issue. We want to know what's going on at Mississauga with the cancellation of the gas plant; we want to know what's going on at Oakville with the cancellation of the gas plant. One committee got advice from the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, who advised us that if he went into Oakville while there was still negotiation going on, he would be very selective about what information he released around Oakville.

We had another committee, the committee on estimates, which got essentially the same advice from the Minister of Energy—formerly the Attorney General—which was: "When Mississauga is complete"—and then once Mississauga was complete—"we're willing to release all the documentation around Mississauga. But as long as Oakville is under negotiation, I need to advise you that there are concerns around solicitor-client privilege, and there are concerns about having a negative impact on value for the taxpayer if we reveal what's under negotiation."

In fact, if you look at the Hansard of the estimates committee, the Chair of that committee is on record advising the committee that "the minister has the right to decline either giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during his answering of the questions." And then he goes on to say, "I would advise that I'm going to allow the motion to proceed, but I would also advise—and I think the minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and I would expect him to do so. That would be my ruling."

So what we are doing here today, which is what I find really offensive about this process—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On a point of order, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I believe that your ruling made it crystal clear that the minister was to turn over—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My ruling has been made. The member is speaking to the issue—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —I wish you wouldn't say something when I'm in the middle of a sentence—and the member will finish.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: What we are doing here is, we are discussing whether the minister should be found to be in contempt of this Legislature for essentially behaving in the same way as the Auditor General said he would behave and for giving the committee the same advice as the Auditor General gave the committee. I would point out that the minister—Oakville now being settled—has in fact tabled all the documents.

The behaviour is the behaviour that we were all seeking and talking about, which is: "Mississauga is a done deal; here are the documents. Now Oakville is a done deal; here are the documents." That's what the minister argued, and that's what the minister did. I find it quite contemptible that we are debating whether we should find somebody in contempt for giving a position which is similar to the position that the Auditor General gave.

1540

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Normally when I rise to speak in this chamber, I start by saying that I'm pleased to join the debate. I can't say that today. I'm actually quite disappointed that we have to be spending our legislative time talking about such an extremely disappointing matter that we have before us. But we've been forced here because of some inaction on the other side.

We find ourselves debating a motion respecting a *prima facie* breach of privilege found against the Minister of Energy on September 13, 2012. I for one think it's worth recapping and sharing with the general public how on earth we got here. How on earth did we get to a point where despite the fact that there are over 600,000 men and women out of work in Ontario right now, all we can debate in this House is focused squarely on the Minister of Energy and his total disdain for the sacred rules of this House?

It's a sad day for sure, Speaker, when we have a government that not only flagrantly disregards the rights of individual MPPs, but also recklessly refuses to strike a standing committee of this Legislature—any standing committee. Now all business here at Queen's Park has truly ground to a halt. This is because there are no committees. There's no time to debate anything other than the Minister of Energy's disregard for parliamentary privilege. This place has been gripped in a severe parliamentary paralysis. Make no mistake: All of this was caused solely by the governing Liberal Party.

And to think that all this occurred under the watch of a Premier who campaigned in the last election on the idea that, with him in charge, there would be a steady hand on the tiller. It hasn't quite turned out to be the case. How ironic, then, that since being elected, this Premier's government has been defined by rampant mismanagement and disgraceful opportunism.

People viewing this at home may be asking, "What has Dalton McGuinty's government gone and done now?" That's certainly what I get in Dufferin-Caledon.

When you boil it down, it's actually relatively simple. Phrases like "*prima facie*" and "parliamentary privilege" aside, what essentially has happened here is that the minister knowingly refused to release documents he did not have the right to keep confidential. You see, the minister—or any minister, for that matter—must be subjected to review and oversight from the Legislature and its committees. That is our job, ultimately. So when the Standing Committee on Estimates passed a motion that required the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to provide the committee with documents relating to the Oakville and Mississauga power plants, the minister had to comply.

That motion was tabled at committee on Wednesday, May 16, over four months ago, and yet, until Monday, the minister refused to release any documents in question, and now we see they have given us only a small pittance of what was demanded. We now know that, despite assurances from the government House leader to the contrary, the documents provided yesterday were heavily redacted, or whited out or blacked out. Use whatever word you want; the reality is that the documents were handed in and they were not complete.

Speaker, this pattern of suppression, this culture of secrecy that has become the signature of this government, is frankly shocking and downright shameful. Time and time again, it seems, we are witness to this government's disregard for anything other than its own self-serving interests. This disturbing pattern is worth outlining because it illustrates an alarming trend on the part of this government.

Consider the Ornge fiasco. First, the Minister of Health presides over the despicable greed and waste that took place there, and then this government does all it can to hinder proper legislative oversight of the rogue agency.

The word "Ornge" has become the epitome of scandal and incompetence in the province of Ontario when it once stood for a very proud ambulance service. Ontarians know about the web of for-profit entities created by the former president of Ornge and ignored by the current Minister of Health. Ontarians have learned about the alleged financial impropriety of such enterprises. The only reason we have delved into it as deeply as we have been able to is because we had that standing committee, because we were afforded those responsibilities as MPPs for oversight and transparency. They've seen the testimonies outlining the totally unprofessional and inappropriate way the agency was run by its senior leaders. Most disturbingly, Ontarians have learned, with sadness, of the tragic patient safety issues at Ornge.

This is why both parties in opposition diligently questioned the minister for months on end on the troubling situation at Ornge. It is also why, after receiving virtually the same non-answer for weeks on end, a majority of this House voted to establish a select committee to investigate Ornge. Let me just repeat that so we're all clear: The majority voted to have a select committee investigate Ornge. Yet here we are, many months later, and no such select committee has been struck. The reason, one may

assume, is because this government does not want further investigation into the happenings at Ornge.

One may also assume this could be part of the reason the government has refused to re-strike—re-form—the standing committees since we began the fall legislative session over four weeks ago. But the problem is that in doing so, since it has disregarded the majority of Ontarians' representatives here in the chamber, the government has chosen to disregard the majority of Ontario voters. That is not right, and it's not acceptable. Yet now we're here, debating repercussions for the Ministry of Energy showing the same sort of disregard for the member from Cambridge's parliamentary privilege.

I fear that the Liberal culture of secrecy may have proven to be quite pervasive, for just last week, the Environmental Commissioner tabled part 1 of his report, *Losing Touch*. In it, he goes into great detail about the degree of disregard and contempt shown by ministries for the Environmental Bill of Rights.

He goes on to state—and this is the Environmental Commissioner—“[V]arious ministries persist in hiding environmentally significant decisions from public scrutiny and comment in open defiance of the clear intent of the statute.”

Open defiance? That sounds familiar, Speaker. It was the Minister of Energy's open defiance of parliamentary privilege that brought on our current debate that we're having today. This is what happens when bold and principled leadership takes a back seat to crass political opportunism. This is what happens when you have a government that defers to the will of unelected and unaccountable campaign teams to make serious policy decisions.

Furthermore, the Environmental Commissioner draws the conclusion that, “Perhaps it is understandable that the ministries are no longer referred to as the ‘civil service,’ because there is nothing civil about the way citizens are often treated when they exercise their legislated right to file a request for investigation or review.”

Speaker, if there's nothing civil about the way citizens are treated when they exercise their legislative rights, then there is also nothing honourable about the way members of this House are treated when they exercise their legislative right, which is why we are debating this motion here today: The Minister of Energy blatantly breached the parliamentary privilege of the member from Cambridge and every other member in this chamber.

Just how did the minister breach the member from Cambridge's parliamentary privilege? Well, as we all know, the Liberal government cancelled a major natural gas power plant in Mississauga while it was in the middle of construction. The Legislature and Ontarians deserve to know what the final cost is going to be for this cancellation. It was raised by the press and the opposition within hours of the announcement being made during the election period: “How much is it going to cost?” Those questions began immediately.

1550

Back in May, no one, except maybe the Minister of Energy, had any idea what the cancellation of the

Oakville power plant would be, because the minister refused to provide any documents related to this when asked by committee.

When the documents were requested, the Minister of Energy, on behalf of the ministry, responded to the committee on May 30 and stated, “In light of the confidential, privileged and highly commercially sensitive nature of these issues, it would not be appropriate for my office or the ministry to disclose information that would prejudice these ongoing negotiations and litigation.” As such, the estimates committee tabled a report to the House advising the Speaker that the minister could be in breach of privilege for contempt of the Legislature because of his refusals to table documents in the committee.

Fast-forward now to July 11. The minister then provided some documents to the committee. However, the documents provided were far from complete. The energy minister then had the audacity to state, in a letter attached to the documents, “Certain information remains subject to privilege and has not been included”—this in addition to the minister also failing to provide any documents pertaining to the Oakville power plant in his submission, as requested by the committee.

There's a lot of legal-speak in there. There's a lot of legislative jargon. The bottom line is, the people of Ontario had the right. We asked, as members of the opposition, to review how much it was going to cost, because ultimately we are on the hook for it—the province of Ontario, the voters of Ontario, the people of Ontario—and at every opportunity, the Liberals, the Minister of Energy, the Ministry of Energy blocked.

It's painfully obvious that a standing committee of the Legislature needs to conduct an in-depth study of this issue. The Liberal government's refusal to table documents and their failure to be transparent makes it clear that the government is hiding something. Ontarians and the Legislature deserve to have access to these documents to hold the government to account. Ultimately, based on all of the information before the Legislature on this issue, it is clear that this matter needs to be brought to committee to be tabled in depth and reported back to the chamber.

The committee would also be able to study what appropriate measures could be taken against the minister should he be found in contempt. This is essential because, as was outlined in the Speaker's ruling, a *prima facie* breach did, in fact, occur. First, the minister failed to table the documents with the committee within the acceptable time frame, and then he did not table what was ultimately requested. When he did table documents, they were incomplete and not what was requested.

As a further example of his contempt for his fellow parliamentarians, he has now tabled literally thousands of redacted and, again, whited-out, blacked-out—call it what you may, but the reality is, there were literally thousands of pages that had only a title, or even less, nothing: blank documents regarding the Oakville power plant, as the member for Nipissing illustrated so well for us during yesterday's debate. I believe and my colleagues

in the PC caucus believe wholeheartedly that most Ontarians find that unacceptable, obstructionist and totally unacceptable.

In closing, I would just like to draw the attention of my colleagues across the aisle to a significant symbol here in this sacred chamber. Here behind me there's an owl. That owl is here to serve as a reminder to the government members for those on the government benches to "use power wisely," to be wise in their stewardship of our beautiful province and to be wise in the management of Ontarians' taxes.

Behind you, in the government benches, you will see an eagle. That eagle serves as a reminder for us in the opposition to always be vigilant.

To be wise and to be vigilant: That is our responsibility.

As I stand here today, I say, without a shadow of a doubt, that we in the official opposition have lived up to the message of the eagle perched high above the floor in this chamber. It is with great regret that I can also say that the government has most sorely failed to live up to the message in the owl, and it is the people of Ontario who are ultimately paying for that.

You can make it right. Comply fully with the Speaker's ruling and, yes, just like a bank robber who has been caught in the act, the Attorney General and the Premier must admit what they did was wrong and take responsibility for their actions and accept the punishment.

I had an email from a constituent today. He's been watching some of the debate and been following it, because like many of us, right from the very beginning he had concerns about how much these two cancellations were going to cost the taxpayers in the province of Ontario. His question to me was: "How can I initiate a class action suit against the Liberal Party?" Because, ultimately, it was the Liberal Party campaign team that made the decision. It wasn't a decision made in the Ministry of Energy. If there's anything that should disturb individuals, families, people who are watching this debate, it's how far out of the process, out of the balance of power we went when you decided within your campaign team during an election that you were going to make an arbitrary rule of changing a location of a power plant that was under construction—and not think that there was going to be any repercussions.

I found it quite interesting that he was looking at the class action angle. It goes beyond what we're discussing here, but it does get to the nub of the issue of how angry, how frustrated people get when they see their government spend money like sailors on leave. It's an indication to me of when they get frustrated and they see the things that they cannot have within their community, when they cannot get that MRI in a timely matter, when they cannot get a hospital expanded or a new hospital built—and then they see the waste. They see the waste at Ornge; they see the waste at eHealth; they see the waste with—we're now talking about \$645 million, and I'm sure there will be more that comes forward.

It's a very disturbing trend that we have been watching for many years on this side of the House, and it's one that needs to stop. And if the way it's going to stop is to deal with this matter and the Minister of Energy and his breach, then so be it, because it needs to end. The concept that you can have a campaign team, a Liberal Party make a decision that's going to impact the province of Ontario for the next 40 or 50 years, is unconscionable to me.

I think that that ultimately is why we have to have this debate today and why we have to resolve this issue now, so that we ensure that down the road this never happens again, because, quite frankly, the province of Ontario can't afford it. And we need to have a better government who's looking out for all of the residents, and not just simply two seat-saver decisions that didn't end up ultimately giving them the treasured majority that they were so desperate to have.

As I said when I began participating in this debate, I'm not pleased that we have to have it. I'm not pleased that this is what the chamber has been seized with for the last three days. But without a doubt, it is what needs to happen, because we cannot have the same disregard, the same ignoring the needs of people, the needs of residents, continue. We can't afford it, and it's not right. I will leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the motion, a motion that I believe is completely self-serving on the part of the official opposition. It's shameful that they are trying to besmirch the integrity of an honourable and hard-working, decent man like the Minister of Energy. It's an attempt to assassinate the character of a man who's devoted years of his life to public service and who has done so honourably and selflessly. Opposition efforts are even more shameful, considering their role in the cancellation of the Mississauga gas plant and the Oakville gas plant.

As the member for Mississauga South, I'm very familiar with the community's concerns about local air quality. It's important for all members to be aware of the context behind the issue in Mississauga.

Interjections.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It sounds as though the PCs have chosen to forget about the role they played, so it's important to remind them.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll remind the official opposition that as I sat and listened to their speaker, there was hardly a word mentioned over here. So under consideration for fairness, I think you should allow them to speak. If you don't like what they say, that's understandable—it works both ways—but I would expect that something as serious as this requires listening and not a shouting match. The next person who shouts out loud will get a last warning. Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The difference, of course, is that on this side of the House the truth is not being bent or slanted at all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I thank the member for his point of order. I guess it will be up to the Chair to determine what happens in here and not the member from that area.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And the member from Etobicoke North shouldn't be talking when I'm standing. Thank you.

Continue.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me remind the House and those watching what has happened. My community has been voicing concerns about air quality for many years, concerned about the levels of particulate matter, nitrogen oxides and sulphur oxides—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister.

I'll remind the member from Nepean—Carleton that I just said, before she walked in, that the next person who speaks out loud will get their last warning. Since you didn't hear it, now you know. Next time, last warning.

Continue.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We on this side of the House sat here quietly and listened. I'm asking you guys to do the same, please.

My community was concerned about the particulate matter in their community. When the community came together to voice their concerns, the community and the government of the day listened. In fact, in 2000, the Ministry of the Environment commissioned a Clarkson airshed study. Results from that study were released between 2006 and 2008 and confirmed that our airshed was stressed. So the community took the next step. They gave of their own volunteer time to participate in the Clarkson airshed advisory committee. They pushed for a task force to examine the problem and provide solutions.

Our government listened and formed the Southwest GTA Air Quality Task Force, under the leadership of Dr. David Balsillie, in 2009. They produced a report to the Minister of the Environment in 2010. The report made it clear that the local airshed was already stressed. It noted the need to think about the cumulative impact of multiple emitters. It reinforced local concerns about introducing new emitters to the airshed. This led our community to become the site for a new pilot project that will help model a national air quality management system. So, years of effort, science on their side and the recommendations of experts in hand, the people of Mississauga and Oakville worked hard to protect their local air quality, and they made great progress.

It truly was a community effort, supported by several great local leaders like Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion; former ward 1 councillor Carmen Corbasson; current ward 1 councillor Jim Tovey; ward 2 councillor Pat Mullin; Oakville Mayor Rob Burton; community leaders and long-time advocates like Dr. Boyd Upper and Julie Desjardins, a strong advocate in the community;

Dorothy Tomiuk of Miranet; Wendy Davies, who that side of the House may know was Chair of the Petro-Canada public liaison committee. There were others like Mike Douglas and Irene Gabon, and Steve Thompson and Tony Jones of CHIP. Thousands more wrote letters and signed petitions. They attended rallies. They called their politicians and requested meetings. The community was united. City council was united, including all other councillors like Maja Prentice, Frank Dale, Eve Adams, Carolyn Parrish, Nando Iannicca, Katie Mahoney, Pat Saito, Sue McFadden and George Carlson.

Even so, electricity planners were saying that local demand for power was growing, citing and remembering the blackouts that had occurred years earlier. The previous government knew this all too well. They had done little to secure the integrity of the grid. That's why the former PC government approved the environmental assessment to site a gas-fired power plant in Clarkson in the southwest area of my riding next to Oakville. But our government was always looking at ways to ensure that we had the generation capacity we needed, especially when we also wanted to stop burning dirty coal. That brings us to the Lakeview coal plant, which was on our waterfront for decades. It was the worst polluter in the GTA. The community rejoiced when our government tore it down. I was proud to fight alongside our community as we pledged that Lakeview would never host another power generator. Instead, we're going to revitalize that precious lakefront.

But after years of PC neglect of our electricity system, there was indeed a lot of work to do to keep the lights on. So the OPA contracted the Oakville facility to meet energy demands of the time. But in October 2010 the government determined that the project would not proceed. It did so for two reasons: There was clear evidence that it no longer required a facility in Oakville to meet energy needs; and in response to significant concerns voiced by the community, including Mayor Rob Burton, MPP Kevin Flynn, MPP Ted Chudleigh and many others in our community, science told us that our airshed was stressed. The point of impingement of emissions from the Oakville plant would adversely affect our and other communities.

The government decision was even supported by the leader of the PCs, Tim Hudak. I quote now Mr. Ted Chudleigh, the member from Halton: "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them." In the *Globe and Mail*, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Hudak, said, "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga." And now they're against the government's decision. If so, they have to come clean to the people of Oakville and Mississauga.

In April 2005, before I was elected, Greenfield South Power Corp. was contracted to develop and operate a gas plant in Mississauga. Since I was first elected to represent the good people of Mississauga South in 2007, I have been consistent. I opposed the location of that plant and believed it was poorly sited. The people of my com-

munity did not want any new emitters constructed. They were concerned about the local air quality, and they needed to be protected. I shared their concerns. My first responsibility is to the people who sent me here, and I was proud to stand with them consistently to protect our air, including—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Point of order, the member from Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, the matter before the House is a point of privilege on behalf of the member for Cambridge. It is not designed to be an opportunity for the member for Mississauga South to tell us why he wasn't able to stop his own government from beginning the building of the plant before they cancelled it. I would ask that he speak to the point of privilege.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before we go to the next point of order, I'll deal with the first point of order. The first point of order is not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Secondly, I don't appreciate the government talking when I'm standing. They won't do that next time, will they? Thank you.

The next point of order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker. This morning, we listened quietly and silently while the Leader of the Opposition spoke to this issue, and I would hope that the members of the opposition will show that same kind of respect for our speakers on this side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): If the Attorney General was noticing, I've admonished them twice already. Secondly, I already warned them that when I warn them for the last time, it is the last time. They haven't got to that level yet, but they're certainly working on it. I'll decide when that happens. Thank you for your sort-of point of order.

Continue.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, as I said before I was rudely interrupted, I stood with my community throughout. I raised our concerns with my colleagues in the government. Let's contrast that with the PC record. From 2005 to the start of the election in 2011, they were completely silent. Members of my community, many of them lifelong Conservatives themselves, reached out to the party and its leader. They asked the PC Party to take a position on the plant. The response from the PC Party was deafening silence. For six years, they ignored the people of Mississauga.

Then came the 2011 election campaign. Concerns were mounting, and people were asking where the candidates stood on the issue. As their local candidate, my position was unchanged. I was opposed to any new emitters being built in our airshed from the very beginning. I had stood in the House to speak against increased emissions at Lakeview, Clarkson, Oakville and Sherway. The PCs' position was also unchanged. They ignored the community and refused to speak up.

The community felt so strongly about the issue that they held a public rally on September 15. The community felt so strongly that they asked all local candidates, including the members from Etobicoke, to attend. As the incumbent MPP asking for the renewed confidence of my neighbours, and as a resident, I felt it was my duty to attend, and my colleagues from Etobicoke attended as well. I told the people there what I had been saying all along: that I opposed any new emitters being built in our sensitive airshed. I was concerned about the cumulative impact of further emissions. I was concerned about the point of impingement on neighbouring regions and the effect it would have on future generations, irrespective of election cycles.

1610

Up until now, the PCs have been completely AWOL on the issue. Now was their chance to finally look community members in the eye and tell them where they stand. But they didn't. Not only did they not speak up; they didn't even respect the community enough to show up.

Later in the campaign, the Ontario Liberal Party made a commitment that, if re-elected, the government would relocate the Mississauga facility to another location. The community was ecstatic. After years of hard work, one of the parties had clearly been listening and taken their concerns seriously.

But the question remained: Where do the other two parties stand? The Hudak PCs and the NDP decided to play johnny-come-lately. They responded to our announcement by saying that they too would make the same commitment. The Globe and Mail cites Mr. Hudak: "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga." Having finally been awoken to this issue, my PC opponent even went further when he told the Mississauga News this: "Only Conservative leader Tim Hudak will cancel the Eastern Power gas plant slated to be built on Loreland Avenue." The Leader of the Opposition came to Mississauga with a bus and a big pink elephant to talk about how they would cancel the power plant; they would cancel the power plant, not relocate it. The implications would have been severe. Then they rebokaled the people of Sherway to tell them this: Only the Hudak PCs would cancel the power plant. They were asking the people of Mississauga to vote for them so that they could cancel the power plant themselves.

This twisting and turning by the PC Party was clearly seen in the community for what it was: a last-ditch attempt to do anything, say anything to try to win a seat—the worst kind of political pandering to try to win votes. And after six years and half of an election campaign of silence, the people of Mississauga were not fooled by this sudden conversion.

Shortly after being re-elected, our government announced the relocation of the Mississauga facility, as promised. We listened to the community. Following through on the commitment made by all three parties, OPA and the proponent reached a deal to relocate the plant.

Let's remember that the PCs tried to put a power plant in Clarkson. Then they were silent on it. The PCs had no position on the Sherway plant for six years. Then they said they would cancel the plant if they had the chance. Now the PCs oppose the government's decision. Remember, this was a commitment that all three parties made to the people of Mississauga. So I challenge the PC Party to speak directly to the people of Mississauga. Where do you actually stand on this? You did nothing for six years; then, halfway through an election, you decided you were against it. Now you don't want to cancel it.

What will happen during the next election? I think the people of my community have a right to know. They've had the right to know ever since 2005, and I am proud that the people of Mississauga and surrounding areas can rest assured that Lakeview, Clarkson, Sherway, Oakville and Etobicoke will be protected for future generations.

It's clear that the PCs aren't interested, however, in talking about the environment or our health. This is really about the politics of constant conflict. This is the same regressive crew that referred to new Canadians as unwelcome foreigners in the 2011 election campaign—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All right. I would suggest that the member will withdraw that last comment. That was unnecessary, about immigration. That's not part of what we're talking about. Withdraw that.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I withdraw. But during that campaign, when they were making promises about cancelling the power plant, they were spreading literature of other sorts. This is the same party that opposed the budget in a minority Parliament before they even looked at it. It's the same party that's ringing bells and rang bells that blocked legislation for months this spring. They've been playing political games on bills like the Accepting Schools Act; the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act; the family caregiver leave; the Ambulance Amendment Act to secure and resolve the issues at Ornge; the Strong Action for Ontario Act in the budget; and now this budget motion that's going to—Mr. Speaker, they've rung the bells 45 times, with over 22 hours of delay. Just yesterday, we were supposed to vote on a bill to help seniors make their homes more accessible. This would allow our seniors to live in their homes for longer more comfortably. It's not being done. Instead, the PC Party is more interested in wasting the Legislature's time and the taxpayers' money than they are in working for Ontarians.

The PC Party wants us to believe their motion is about the release of documents. On Monday, the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority released 36,000 records requested by the estimates committee. The government put each and every document on a USB key and provided one to each of the opposition parties and the Clerk—some additional items of that USB key. The request of the committee for these documents has been satisfied—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean–Carleton is getting very close to her last warning.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The matter should be over. We should be standing here today working together, debating legislation to make this province a better place.

Why are we debating this contempt motion? This isn't about the documents at all, is it? The PC Party is attempting to smear the good name of an honourable man. It's shameful. It's disgraceful.

The Minister of Energy is a man of integrity. He has served as Attorney General of this province for four years—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Point of order: The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Standing order 23(i) prohibits a member of imputing the motives of another member of this Legislature. I just heard the minister—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to make a point of order. Apparently, they don't like it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't really think that's a point of order. Certainly, if you have a problem with it, you should bring it in a different form.

Secondly, that's the last warning to the government. When I stand, you're quiet—last warning. I'm going to start throwing people out.

Continue.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Point of order, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: If the member opposite is concerned with imputing motives, is he prepared to withdraw the motion before the House?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's not a point of order. Thank you very much.

Continue.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, before the member, the Minister of Energy, came to this place, he was a respected member of the Ontario bar of the highest standing and reputation. He's well respected and he's an honourable man. The Minister of Energy has put the public interest before his own and has dealt clearly to reach those initiatives. Speaker, this is indeed a sad day when members resort to degrading personal attacks like this. After years in the private sector, I chose my civic duty to serve my community. The community does come first.

PCs should respect this place and engage in civil debate, not hyper-partisan personal attacks. They're playing political games with a man's reputation. I proudly stand and support the principled actions of this minister. The witch hunt the opposition is undertaking is about scoring cheap political points; it's about dragging a good man's name through the mud. It's beneath them. It's beneath all of us. They should do the honourable thing and withdraw this reprehensible motion.

To my colleagues in the NDP: I know you are women and men of good conscience. I know you entered politics to try to do what's right. The minister has complied with

the committee's request and the ruling of the Speaker. He has personally attested to the documents being complete, and as parliamentarians, we are bound to respect that.

To proceed with this motion is to call the integrity of every single member in this chamber into question. It will send a message that no member's word is to be trusted. The implications for our democracy are enormous. This is an assault on our traditions of respect and democracy in this very place. We may disagree on policy, we may disagree on priorities or on how we manage the province's finances, but we can have the discussions without impugning each other's character.

This motion belittles all of us, and I urge you not to support it.

I ask the opposition members and all of us in this House to reflect on what it is that's being done here. I chose to do my civic duty not to get into political gains such as this. We all have a responsibility to the broader public. We all have a responsibility to our neighbours and friends at home. We all have a responsibility to work together, especially now in this minority government. We can do that. We can do that with respect. We can do that with collaboration—not always easy to do.

I don't question your motives because I believe everybody's intentions are good, regardless of political stripe.

Interjection.

1620

Hon. Charles Sousa: But your motion has put into question that integrity, and we were asked—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Member from Renfrew, last warning. Member from Nepean, you're very close. You know what the next move is.

Continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Nepean—Carlton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The member just actually did impugn motive when he questioned our integrity. In earlier speeches when the member went to that close of the line, that member was asked to withdraw that statement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I appreciate that point of order, and it's a good point of order. However, I didn't hear it because there was too much action over here. So maybe if you were a little quieter I might catch those things.

Continue.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm asking members across the way, and all of us, to reflect on what's being done. I'm asking the member opposite who put forward the motion to withdraw it. I'm asking everybody to reflect on the long-term implications of what this means. The member—the minister—has attested to saying that he has provided all of the information. If you have some blank forms on some UBS key, go downstairs and see the hard copies where they are. Get the info. It's there. What I'm

saying is, you're now challenging the word of a man who has been so honourable to us all, and I ask all of you to do the same.

The opposition has suggested—from both sides, I must say—that we're playing political games for whatever reflection of elections and so forth. I tell those who are watching: This is all about political games in this instance. I would ask them to stop playing nonsense and get back to work. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to, in a very serious and genuine tone, address the House this afternoon on this motion.

Just to start with the previous speaker from Mississauga South—I believe he was trying to shift the focus here. I think if the viewer at home—I think it's important to kind of review where we are and what we're actually talking about. I know that it would be worthwhile if persons looked at the statement made today—the speech made by the member from Newmarket—Aurora.

This is not about personalities; this is about transparency and accountability. Names will be mentioned only as their duties as ministers or Premiers or other members of cabinet—here's exactly where we are: The motion, as it stands, by Mr. Leone, is “that this House direct the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to table immediately with the Clerk of the House all remaining documents ordered by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012; and

“That the matter of the Speaker's finding of a prima facie case of privilege, with respect to the production of documents by the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to the Standing Committee on Estimates, be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which is hereby reconstituted as it existed on September 9, 2012; and

“That the committee shall be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair, and shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012.”

Now, there have been two amendments moved, so we're actually debating the amendments. The amendment on September 25 by Mr. Leone was to delete the “November 19” reference and make it “November 23.” So he's giving more time to the committee to report. Mr. Tabuns, from the NDP, moved an amendment that the words “November 23” be removed and the following added: “November 26.” So we're just adding time for a fuller, more wholesome debate.

So really it comes down to the points that have been made repeatedly. I'll try not to repeat all of them, but it is about transparency and accountability.

Now, for the general public who may find a lot of this an inside story or inside baseball, it's important to put in some context what we're talking about. We're talking about a potential, scandalous waste or a lack of accountability and transparency of some half-a-billion-plus dollars of taxpayers' money with nothing to show for it—

no highways, no hospitals, no MRIs and no daycare for children.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has spoken on this, shown leadership. Our caucus has been consistent in not going into the ditch, as mentioned by the Liberals, using personal slurs.

The leader of the NDP has taken the time out of her busy schedule to address this House, and yet the Premier and senior cabinet officials, the Minister of Energy—not been in the House for any part of this debate. I think that is actually sort of dismissing the importance of this important debate, and I would say to you this: I would hope that the Premier would take this issue of being in contempt very seriously, because it is.

Now, the history isn't something that just happened last weekend. According to the record, and this is from the decision and background of the original Speaker's decision, on September 13, the Speaker—the following rules were issued on Monday the 27th. This is a sequence for the people to understand the context of the debate here about transparency and accountability of half a billion dollars of taxpayers' money, and they're still trying to make this into a personal slur—we're not. I have the greatest respect for Mr. Bentley. I've spoken to him on a number of issues in my riding, one of which I'll mention later. But there is a point where the committee asked him for information where he deliberately did not produce the information, and of the 36,000 pages that were produced, many of them are blank. There's no correspondence from any of the last three Ministers of Energy: nothing from Mr. Smitherman, nothing from Mr. Duguid, and nothing from the current minister as well. There's no information on anything after December 2011.

What's happened? The purchase agreements and the cancellation of contract have all transpired; there's no paper in the 36,000. The 36,000 pieces of paper were strictly another barrier to prevent the opposition from finding out the truth, and the truth is what the people of Ontario want us to pursue.

Now, if you look at the transition here, Mr. Speaker, it's important in the context of how frustrated we are in the opposition. We don't have the resources of cabinet and all of the civil service working feverishly on our behalf. We have great staff that have done some great work, and Mr. Leone and the members of that committee that brought this thing to the attention of the Legislature.

On Monday, August 27, the member for Cambridge, Mr. Leone, rose on a question of privilege covering the government's failure to produce certain documents requested by the Standing Committee on Estimates. The government House leader, Mr. Milloy, and others spoke on it and spoke on the matter.

"Having reviewed the notice"—this is the speech from the Speaker. We should listen to this. The Speaker of this Legislature is really the judge and referee, if you will. "Having reviewed the notice provided by the member from Cambridge, the subsequent written submissions of the government House leader and of the member from

Cambridge, the August 27 report of the Standing Committee on Estimates, relevant Hansards for the committee and various parliamentary authorities, I am now prepared to rule on the matter."

Now, this is what we should respect, the Speaker, and I thank Mr. Speaker here as well that's sitting today.

Here's the sequence: On May 16, the standing committee formally adopted a motion requesting this information. On May 30 the minister responded by saying it would be inappropriate. On June 5, the standing committee brought a motion, forwarded by Mr. Leone again, calling for the report from the committee to the House with respect to the minister's May 30 decision not to provide the requested documents, and finally adopting the version of a motion contained in the committee's report. And it goes on, on July 11, an agreement having been reached to reallocate the Mississauga plant to Sarnia, and the minister provided some requested documents: very, very lack of full disclosure, a real unwillingness to co-operate on behalf of the taxpayers and the opposition.

On August 27, shortly after the member from Cambridge rose on his question of privilege, the Standing Committee on Estimates reported that for the reasons indicated in the report, the government had not produced all the documents. And it goes on at some length. A great job done by the Speaker; I commend him and the table clerks for their thoroughness.

Here's the real decision, and don't be distracted—the people viewing today and reading Hansard, do not be distracted. Here's what the referee and judge of this House told us as members. We're all subject to this order. Who's in compliance may be a question as well.

"The Standing Committee on Estimates"—this is the Speaker's ruling—"was unquestionably" denied "to request the documents sought from the Minister of Energy"—so that's clear, unquestionably denied—"and in the end the minister had an obligation to comply with the committee's call for those documents"—

Interjections.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Can I ask the third party and a couple of visitors down there—is the third party listening? Is the House leader for the Liberals listening? I would suggest, if you want to have a big meeting, you might want to go outside. I can't hear. It's so loud down there I'm having trouble hearing him. I like to spread it around for everybody, so take it outside, and I see we have a visitor to the Attorney General over there. That's fine. Keep it down. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. John O'Toole: Can you reset the clock, please? I've lost—I'd like to go back to 20 minutes.

I thank you for that interruption because most people aren't as focused, perhaps; I know on the government side they're not focused. It's a tragedy because of the work I put into this, and our caucus, and our leader, Mr. Hudak as well.

It says: "The Standing Committee on Estimates was unquestionably entitled to request the documents sought

from the Minister of Energy, and in the end the minister had an obligation to comply with the committee's call for those documents. The committee did not accept the minister's reason for withholding the documents and persisted in its demands during an extended period of time." There's the ruling. Here's the judge. You got a ticket here. This is a ticket, and you've got to pay up. He said, "I am therefore satisfied that a *prima facie* case of privilege has been established"—period. The judge has ruled. Why are we trying to deflect it? Why?

Here's the Toronto Star. This again has been referred to by others—very important. It's kind of a third party commentator, mostly in favour of the Liberals, but nonetheless. It goes on here to say, "Liberal MPPs Vent over 'Embarrassing' Power Plant Payouts." That's not me; it's a little blunter than I would say it. It goes on here and it says, "Liberal MPPs let off steam behind closed doors in a heated debate over the government's 'embarrassing' \$230-million payouts to close controversial power plants in Mississauga and Oakville. It's not \$230 million; it's half a billion dollars. It's a new billion-dollar scale—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Minimum. The lawyers are just salivating. Here it is. This is important: "Senior" Liberal "ministers used terms like 'shameful.'" I honestly say—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, I don't question the integrity at all. I would hope they all feel shameful. If they just stood today and apologized—I believe that our leader is prepared to make Ontario much more transparent and accountable, and we'll get the job done. We may need the keys to the car.

I would add this: "Some MPPs insisted"—these are Liberal MPPs—"they would have been just as candid if McGuinty had been in the room, while others said that his absence made it easier to rage"—afraid of not getting into cabinet. "'This is embarrassing,' one minister" said, and I could almost put names to these. The "shameful," "embarrassing"—all of them are true.

Here's what the Premier said. This is what the Premier of Ontario said. This is quoted. I hope that Hansard is paying attention: "'We made two missteps; we recognize that,'" he told reporters in Oakville, a riding held by Liberal MPP Kevin Flynn, where a natural-gas fired power plant was cancelled two years ago because of strong community opposition.

"That settlement cost at least \$40 million." Those are not the facts.

Look, do you know what it costs for a plant? Do you have any idea? A nuclear plant that you had a bid on in Darlington in my riding was \$25 billion, so \$40 million wouldn't buy you the property. The numbers they're giving us—the member from Mississauga South knows, as a former banker. A wealthy Bay Street banker, I think, really.

Here's the other thing. It goes on in this article. It just basically tells that many of the Liberals are as frustrated as the people of Ontario. I just want to go on the history

that I've made and remind members to have a look at the Hansard; look it up.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora talked about accountability and transparency, and the threat to the very democracy that makes this place legitimate. So we have to take our work seriously and remember that the \$650 million—probably much more. I say it's a billion-dollar boondoggle. It's the third one. Here's the issue: It's better off now to admit you're wrong. The Premier has as much as said it. Almost everyone over there has said a *mea culpa* in some respects, and the Toronto Star is trying to help you get out of this.

I think it should go to committee as soon as possible so that we can call the real witnesses—the head of the OPA; call the deputy ministers. Let's get to the facts here. I would say this: Everything I've read by almost all the experts—including Vic Fedeli, our critic; the great work he's done on this—is that you have made a complete, disastrous mess out of the energy file—absolutely unmistakable.

This is shameful, because our leader has said, even during the election, that this is an economic file, not a social file. You tried, with the Green Energy Act, to change the channel; I get it—

Interjection: It was a social experiment.

Mr. John O'Toole: It was a social experiment that has, at this point, failed. That doesn't say—we're not against renewable energy. We're against power that costs 30 cents or 80 cents a kilowatt hour, when it used to cost about five cents a kilowatt hour. That's the real story here—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: As my friend here from Sarnia–Lambton said, Adam Beck's principle was power at cost. I think he went on to build the strongest economy in Canada, and others would agree.

As I said, I've read the one Toronto Star article, but there are other articles in the paper that I think support many of what I'd call—the one I'm looking for here is what Mr. Tabuns said. He's the NDP critic. It's not just our people saying it. It says, "'We want to uncover the truth—that's our goal....'" That's what Mr. Rob Leone said, and then it went on: "NDP MPP Peter Tabuns said it's not clear from the documents how ministers even communicated with each other.

"We can't do our job and the public cannot do its job if documents are obscured and withheld."

The public needs to know this is what we believe. This is what the Speaker, the judge of the Legislature, said—all the documents are incomplete. They've been redacted—blank pages, missing pages, and it's sent us on a wild goose chase with 36,000 pages of needless dribble. The content is, how much did it cost and who signed it? They tried to make the argument—Mr. Speaker, in truth, to you, with the limited time I have left—that we somehow agreed with the cancellation of these plants. No, no, no, no. The truth is this: We never agreed with the Oakville and Mississauga plants as the sites. The Liberal cabinet made decisions and signed expensive contracts to

go ahead with these sites. Mr. Sousa, Mr. Flynn and others were upset with that because they were going to lose their seats. During the elections and prior to, they actually decided not to.

Having been here for 17 or 18 years—we closed the Lakeview plant. The minister at the time—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I was here; you weren't.

The minister at the time was Elizabeth Witmer, and that plant was closed by us. They knew there was going to be a hollow-out of a generation facility like Lakeview and that they needed more power for that southwest part of Ontario—an important part of Ontario, you might say. The decisions you made were flawed. You might be correct that you ran on not building it. Our candidate certainly did; you made that clear. But it's not about that; it's about the correct policies. That's what this is about. You made an error. McGuinty admitted it right in this article. He says, "We made two mistakes," and that was it. He finally did the right thing: He produced the documents. We want to know what it cost. He said "\$40 million." If he's sticking to that number, and he—here's the issue: As a judge would look at it, an outside—if he thinks it's \$40 million, let's have an auditor come in. Why did he say "\$40 million" if he didn't know it was \$40 million? If he knew it wasn't \$40 million, then he was lying. Do you understand? He was either ignorant or lying.

Mr. Jeff Leal: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down, please.

Point of order, the member from St. Catharines.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Peterborough. That's okay. I like the member from St. Catharines, too—great guy.

I would think that that point needs to be withdrawn. Saying that a person's a liar is unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member will withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw.

I'm sure he didn't do it on purpose, anyway.

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But the fact is, you shouldn't make promises. He promised to close the coal plants in 2011. He promised to do it in 2007; he promised in 2003, in 2007, in 2011. You cannot trust the Premier now. And now they won't tell us the truth and now they won't give us the documents.

So I think you're in the shady part of your rule of Ontario. I think this is a great opportunity for the Liberal Party and some of its members to come clean. Come clean and do the right thing. Just produce how much it cost—we can cut right to the chase here—and start listening to the policies that we're putting on the table, addressing the needs of the economy.

Two more things: one of the most scandalous things—you should look it up. The people of Ontario should look up the whole issue when people are talking about energy

costs. Look at the Auditor General's report on the global adjustment. It's going to cost \$8 billion because of the Green Energy Act and the global adjustment. I'm not making these numbers up. It's the Auditor General's report: \$8 billion. It's going to cost six cents a kilowatt hour for energy—not that you consume—to support or subsidize a failed industry, a failed experiment, if you will.

The people of Ontario, the businesses of Ontario and the economy of Ontario have been put at severe risk because of the mismanagement of this government, and the Premier has not even spoken on the issue, except to the media. Step forward and show some leadership.

Our leader was here today, and I would recommend that people take a look back at Hansard and see our position. It's not to deal with personal smearing; that's what they're doing on the other side. What this is about is accountability and transparency and respect for the Speaker of this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm looking forward to joining in this debate. I think what we have to do—there's been a lot of debate and a lot of generalities passed back and forth from the opposition parties, but the fact of the matter is, nobody has spoken yet to the very detailed response that the Minister of Energy made when asked to respond to the motion to produce the documents, and I think what's important for me to do is to refer to the motion that's before the House now.

The motion says: "Despite ... [the] directive of the committee, and despite giving ample time to comply, the Minister of Energy, the Honourable Christopher Bentley, MPP for London West, on behalf of the Ministry of Energy, responded in writing to the committee on May 30, 2012, which included the following excerpt"—and it's a short sentence: "In light of the confidential, privileged and highly commercially sensitive nature of these issues, it would not be appropriate for my office or the ministry to disclose information that would prejudice these ongoing negotiations and litigation."

So they've extracted that one sentence from what was a very detailed reply—four pages, single-spaced, small type—that went into a very detailed rationalization about why the minister was claiming privilege over certain documents. I think, in fairness, by any measure of fairness to the minister, that this chamber should be privy to or have the benefit of that whole explanation of the minister.

This is what the minister said in his written correspondence, May 30, 2012, addressed to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates, Mr. Michael Prue:

"Dear Mr. Prue"—and this is important. This is important for the viewers; this is important for the media; this is important for everybody who has to address this issue of whether the minister was in contempt, because I think on any fair reading of the minister's written response about why he was not in a position to release the documents at that point in time, it's clear that the minister

was not in any way, by any stretch of the imagination, in contempt.

This is what the minister said: "I am writing in response to the May 16, 2012, estimates committee motion brought forward by MPP Robert Leone under standing order 110(b) directing the Minister of Energy, the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to produce all correspondence 'in any form, electronic or otherwise, that occurred between September 1, 2010, and December 31, 2011, related to the cancellation of the Oakville power plant as well as all correspondence, in any form, electronic or otherwise, that occurred between August 1, 2011, and December 31, 2011, related to the cancellation of the Mississauga power plant.'"

Now, here is the minister's position: "I respect the authority of the committee and its interest in receiving this information. The committee has an important role to play with respect to review of ministries' operations and is entitled to ask questions and seek answers"—hardly a contemptuous opening.

"As previously discussed with the committee"—the minister was at the committee day after day after day—"over the last number of sessions, there are confidential, privileged and commercially sensitive issues involved with ... the Oakville and Mississauga power plants. There is ... ongoing litigation"—that's court proceedings—"with respect to the Mississauga power plant.

"In response to the committee's motion, the Ministry of Energy has undertaken a search for the requested correspondence." They're not ducking the issue. "It is clear that these files are indeed confidential and in many cases the documentation is subject to solicitor-client privilege, litigation privilege and/or is" of a highly sensitive commercial nature.

The minister just didn't get the request to produce the documents and say, "No, I'm not giving them to you." They went back and did a detailed analysis. They sought the best legal advice. They carefully and sensitively responded to this.

"Disclosure of these documents is anticipated to have a negative" effect "on resolution of these files in light of ongoing, confidential discussions, as well as litigation, in these files. The realities of the sensitive discussions that are occurring, as well as ongoing legal issues, cannot be forgotten as the committee pursues its objectives."

Here we get into the nub of it: "As a threshold issue in response to the motion, you had to determine whether MPP Leone's motion was in order. In your May 16 ... ruling, you noted the committee's right to ask for documents. You also noted that I"—referring to the minister—"have the right"—this was the committee that made this recommendation, and this is important.

"In your May 16 ... ruling, you noted"—referring to the committee—"the committee's right to ask for documents. You also noted I have the right"—and this is from the committee—"to either decline giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during ... answering of the questions." You further stated that I 'may choose to answer the question in such a way as not

to prejudice the province in any way.' Moreover, you"—again referring to the committee—"indicated that you expected me to approach my responses in this way." They're inviting the minister to exercise his judgment as to whether the documents should be released and in what form.

The minister took up the committee's invitation and said in the letter, "In light of the confidential, privileged and highly commercially sensitive nature of these issues, it would not be appropriate for my office or the ministry to disclose information that would prejudice these ongoing negotiations and litigation. I also note that these very commercially sensitive negotiations between the OPA, the government and TransCanada Corp. and Greenfield South Holdco Corp. and Greenfield South Power Corp. ... have been carried out on a without-prejudice basis"—that is, between the parties. "Thus"—as a result of that without-prejudice basis—"both the government and the OPA have legal obligations to not disclose the content of those negotiations"—and listen to this—"at this time." It's not a blanket "I'm not going to give it to you." The implication is, "You'll get them at the appropriate point in time."

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"However, I am able to provide a chronology on both plants and outline why the decisions were made to locate them.

"Mississauga gas plant chronology

"On April 12, 2005, the OPA and Greenfield executed a clean energy supply contract to develop and operate Greenfield South generation station, a 280-megawatt combined cycle natural gas plant in ... Mississauga. This contract followed a competitive procurement that was run by the Ministry of Energy. This contract was amended and restated as of March 16, 2009.

"Over the ensuing six years, requisite environmental and generation approvals were obtained, but local public opposition to the gas plant grew. Mississauga council and local residents' groups expressed concerns about the proposed plant.

"On December 10, 2008, the Ministry of the Environment issued a certificate of approval for air and noise" for the Greenfield South project.

"On June 3, 2009, an electricity generation licence for Greenfield was issued by" the OEB.

"In May 2011, Greenfield entered into a financing agreement with EIG Management Co. to finance the gas plant. Greenfield subsequently obtained a building permit from the city of Mississauga" to allow construction.

"On May 30, 2011, the city of Mississauga issued a building permit" to permit the construction.

"On June 15, 2011, the Minister of the Environment requested Greenfield to provide an updated assessment of its anticipated emissions which conforms to the requirements" of the various regulations under the environmental act.

"On June 22, 2011, the city of Mississauga passed a resolution requesting ... the Minister of the Environment" to conduct a full environmental assessment, "and request-

ing that the Minister of Energy conduct a full review to determine the necessity of manufacturing 280 megawatts of electricity in a densely populated urban zone.

"On June 24, 2011, Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion wrote a letter to then Minister ... Brad Duguid regarding" the resolution about the environmental assessment plan. She outlined her concerns about it.

"On September 24, 2011, a Liberal Party news release was issued which committed that under a future Liberal government, the plant would not go forward at the current location. It also expressed a commitment to work with the developer to find a new location for the plant, should the Liberals form a government. Around this time, the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democratic Party also committed"—also committed—"that they would not allow the plant to proceed in the community."

So, going into that election, three political parties—PC, NDP and Liberal—were *ad idem*—in agreement—on what should be done with those plants.

"On October 12, 2011, the city of Mississauga passed a further resolution asking the government" to immediately stop construction.

"On November 21, 2011, the OPA issued a media statement indicating there would be no gas plant" in Mississauga. The discussions about where to relocate would remain ongoing.

These are the confidential, commercially sensitive and privileged documents in negotiations between the parties regarding not proceeding with that plant, that all three political parties in that campaign agreed to.

"On November 21, 2011, the Ministry of Energy also issued a media statement."

On March 27, there were various negotiations held, and "EIG for itself and as agent for—and this is the important part: "On March 27, EIG, for itself and as agent for note holders under the note purchase agreement, simultaneously brought a claim"—a piece of litigation—"against Greenfield in New York state for breach and default of" the contract.

On March 27, "EIG served a statement of claim naming Ontario and the OPA as defendants." So now we're into the complicated litigation.

The minister goes on to say in the letter, "Even as the parties pursue their legal rights through court proceedings" that I've just outlined, "discussions between the parties are ongoing." The minister said he was providing this chronology and his intention was "to highlight for the committee the sensitivity of the commercial interests that are at stake and the important context surrounding the committee's request."

Then the minister goes on to outline the Oakville chronology. With respect, the Oakville chronology is a long one, but essentially it goes through the same sort of thing: There were discussions with the community and feedback from the community, all parties decided it was not a good idea and that was their campaign position, it was announced that the project was not going ahead, and then litigation arose.

So the minister's final conclusion on this is that "this chronology of events with respect to the Oakville gas plant is intended to highlight for you the" sensitive "commercial context surrounding the ongoing ... discussions" to resolve the situation. He concludes in the letter—this is the end of the four page letter—"Disclosing anything more at this time would significantly prejudice the province's interests.

"I hope this information is helpful and is sufficient for ... the committee." It then goes on.

The next letter was submitted to the committee at the same time as the minister's letter. So now we have a situation where the minister hasn't just walked away from the committee's request; he has provided a detailed and thoughtful answer. The core of the answer is: There are sensitive litigation matters, sensitive negotiations. It's in the public interest for the minister to get the best possible deal for Ontario. So I'm not in a position to disclose those documents—always in his letter—at this time.

The OPA also wrote to the committee Chair on May 30, and offered its response and essentially made the same arguments that there are sensitive commercial negotiations, there's litigation involved and there are privileged documents involved. The idea is not to disclose Ontario's negotiating position, not to expose what its bottom line is when it's sitting down with these power companies trying to strike the best deal for the people of Ontario to make it as least costly as possible.

For those same reasons, the chief executive officer of OPA, Colin Andersen, after detailing the technical reasons why the documents could not be released, summarizes the position in the last paragraph or two of his letter. He says, "The provision of correspondence to the committee related to these two matters"—Oakville and Mississauga—"would disclose material which is legally privileged"—that's something the courts protect and lawyers get involved in, and even if the minister wanted to release it, there's a legal privilege attached to it—"and has been provided by other parties in confidential, without-prejudice negotiations. Such disclosure is likely to significantly prejudice the position of OPA and the province in the ... highly commercially sensitive negotiations and in the current litigation"—"litigation" is the court case.

"I hope that this response is of assistance to the committee...."

What do we take from these two very detailed responses from both the minister and the CEO of OPA? What they tell us is that they recognize this issue between the builders and the province on these two plants that are not going ahead, keeping in mind that all three political parties were of the view that they ought not to go ahead. So it falls on the government of the day to conclude the negotiations. The government of the day, the minister of the day, in this case Minister Bentley, the ministry and, I dare say, everybody in this chamber, wants to get the best deal for the taxpayers of Ontario, to get the most advantage that we can get out of this very sensitive

commercial litigation. So all the minister and the CEO of OPA said was, "At this point in time, we're not in a position to release those documents."

1700

I was at estimates committee. If you check the Hansard, what I said at estimates committee on behalf of the minister and on behalf of the government was that, on the conclusion of these negotiations—they're signed, stamped—they would be released. In fact, early on, some time ago, we released the Mississauga negotiations, and we know what that cost. The Oakville negotiations were still at that very sensitive stage where parties were jockeying for position, and the position at estimates committee that I conveyed on behalf of the minister and the government—and I did so at length; you've got the correspondence here, which was filed with the committee—was that when Oakville was concluded and we had struck the best possible deal for the taxpayers and the people of Ontario, those documents would be released.

Those discussions were concluded a few days ago, and so and behold, the documents were released.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: All of them.

Mr. David Zimmer: All of them. In my submission, it would have been negligent for the minister or the ministry or the CEO of OPA to release those documents at a time when their negotiations were still outstanding and the release of the documents could have prejudiced Ontario's position. The minister and the CEO of OPA were upholding the highest possible standard. The minister did not walk away from that committee's request for documents; he submitted a detailed response to it, as did the CEO of OPA. There is nothing contemptuous there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion—obviously a historic motion that this government has brought upon itself, essentially, through this constant secretive hide-and-seek game playing, all at the cost of \$640 million to ratepayers, taxpayers, citizens of the province of Ontario. In my view, it's an egregious example. We see a government out of ideas. Through the estimates committee we have asked for some paperwork, some documents, and again, after some foot-dragging and after a historic Speaker's declaration, we now have been provided with documents, documents that have been redacted.

That's a word that isn't necessarily that familiar in my riding, "redacted." I assume that means manipulated, edited, revised. I suppose we could look up the word "redacted." We know some of the documents were whited out; some of the documents are incomplete. That's unparliamentary. That isn't the way things should work. It's a slap in the face to what we try to do in this Legislature, and, obviously, it's an effort to hide something. I assume it's an effort to hide the truth, given that the decisions, both Oakville and Mississauga, were politically driven to save some jobs, cancel the plants, again at a cost of \$640 million, although we are counting. We may be getting up to \$650 million.

Again, who pays that? Initially, the ratepayer; probably, through various means, the taxpayer as well.

When debate commenced, in what I consider his first kind of desperate response to our motion, House Leader Milloy—I wish to quote Hansard—stated, "I'm old enough to remember the party of Bill Davis.... What's going on here today ... is not the party of Bill Davis or John Robarts." If I could paraphrase a Democratic vice-presidential representative—he was up against Dan Quayle. Some may remember watching this on television. It was a 1988 vice-presidential debate. We had a kind of similar line of reasoning—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Lloyd Bentsen.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Lloyd Bentsen, thank you.

If I may paraphrase Democratic vice-presidential candidate Lloyd Bentsen: Mr. Milloy—he was with the NDP recently—you're no Bill Davis. Mr. Milloy, you're no John Robarts. The reason I say that—perhaps the whip did watch that on television—

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did watch the debate. He said, "I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy."

Mr. Toby Barrett: Good for you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down, please. I'm glad you two are having a lovely discussion between you. Don't forget the little Speaker.

Mr. Toby Barrett: We're going down memory lane.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, well, while you're going down memory lane, tow the Speaker with you. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toby Barrett: No apologies necessary, in my view—

Mr. Jeff Leal: I just had the exact quote, and that was it.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, we looked it up, and back then the Republican Dan Quayle—we all know Dan Quayle—said, "I have as much experience in Congress as Jack Kennedy when he sought the presidency," and Mr. Bentsen rebutted, "Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy." By extension I say: Mr. Milloy, you're no Bill Davis.

In the opening debate Mr. Milloy also stated, with reference to the member of Haldimand—Norfolk—Speaker, can I call you to order for a second here? I pointed out the potential for Nanticoke OPG instead of the proposed Clarkson plant. We called it the Clarkson plant; that's the Oakville TransCanada operation. I proposed in writing that Nanticoke receive consideration. Of course I would request that, as did area mayors up in that neck of the country, our local Haldimand county mayor as well.

I wrote a letter to the minister on June 21, 2010. At that time, as we would recall, this government hadn't put a shovel in the ground at Oakville. You hadn't dug any footings; you hadn't poured concrete. We told you it was not a good location again and again. It wasn't up to us to make the decision. The government made the decision.

The gas plant was located in—as was referred to earlier—the Clarkson airshed. That was a government decision.

What have they done now? They've moved it to Bath. They've moved it to Lennox and Addington. Not much demand for electricity down in that part of Ontario, I understand, from my colleague opposite. That plant is close to mothballed—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Less than 1%.

Mr. Toby Barrett: There's an interjection—something like 1%; we've heard 5%, 10%. There are no wires, no capacity—the transmission to get the electricity from down in the Kingston/Bath area back up through Toronto over to the west side of Toronto, the western GTA: Oakville and Mississauga area; even if they were to do that, it would cost something like \$200 million.

Going back to Nanticoke: Nanticoke has the infrastructure and has had the infrastructure for well over 40 years. It has a massive transmission corridor; many corridors run north and south through my riding from Middleport up to the western part of Toronto. We are southwest of Toronto, as you would know. I normally say we're south of Hamilton; in this case, we're southwest of Toronto. We have the workforce, as you know. We have received an environmental assessment approval for a natural gas pipeline, a \$300-million project, to run—again, looking at the future and the declining and very competitive rate for shale gas—shale gas. Anyone in the United States knows shale gas is the future for manufacturing.

My son and I were down south of Pittsburgh a few months ago trying to get a motel room anywhere south or west of Pittsburgh—the drilling rigs down there. Things are cooking, Speaker.

1710

I mentioned we have the workforce; I should have said we had the workforce. Mr. McGuinty has eliminated over 400 jobs now at the OPG Nanticoke power generating station. Granted, he saved two jobs here; my riding lost 400 jobs. So this government makes an ill-conceived decision to locate a gas plant in an area where nobody wants it.

I wrote the minister with an alternative, as was pointed out by Mr. Milloy, the government House leader, an alternative that municipalities in the area felt made sense: Reconsider. Look at Nanticoke as an alternative. Further to that proposal—ask the Power Workers' Union. Nanticoke assets are already paid for, and that's with selling electricity at four cents per kilowatt hour. Convert the plant to natural gas, convert it to biomass; don't build a brand new plant. I'll come back to Nanticoke, if time permits.

Before there was any talk of the Oakville/Mississauga project, we had Lakeview, an OPG property. It was destined for natural gas. As I recall, Hazel McCallion put pressure on this government, indicative of how this government makes some decisions, and again the politics kick in. Now it's become obvious over the past few years—and very clearly we knew this—people in Missis-

sauga/Oakville don't like natural gas. We recognize natural gas as a greenhouse gas, something this particular government also has concerns about. But you know, in that area—and there are probably some members here from that area. I would assume, Minister, that every single home in Mississauga and the Oakville area has a steel pipe coming into the house, piping in natural gas—natural gas for furnaces, for home heating, for air conditioners, for cooking stoves.

The good people down in that part of the southwestern GTA may not want natural gas in their backyards, but they have it in their basements and they have it in their kitchens. But again, a government such as this government—they flip-flop, they weather vane—I'm not sure if that's a verb or not—with the changing direction of the wind. That's no way to make a decision about something as important as Ontario's energy.

People are now raising the question with respect to the decision-making of other energy-related issues in this province. Go a little further north in the western GTA; there's a new gas plant in Halton Hills. Anyone who drives on the 401 saw that one go up. Go a little further north and to the east. There's the Holland Marsh peaker plant. Ask Jamie Reaume and the Holland Marsh vegetable growers' association about that one. So I see a trend here. Liberal ridings don't have to put up with industrial generating stations, hence saving the jobs of people like Kevin Flynn and Charles Sousa. Let's not forget Laurel Broten—I'll name some names—from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and Donna Cansfield, the member for Etobicoke Centre. Let's throw in Mississauga-Streetsville—Bob Delaney, just to be clear; Mississauga-Brampton South—election politics at the expense of the electricity ratepayers.

So here's the tally: six jobs saved. My riding lost 400 jobs with the shutting down of coal at Nanticoke. The fact that you vote Conservative—and there are some Conservatives in here behind me, I notice—you get the Halton Hills generating station, you get the Holland Marsh peaker plant. You get Mississauga's plant transferred to Sarnia-Lambton. You get Oakville's plant transferred to the great riding—I wrote this one down; someone asked me not to mention names—of Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. Did I get that right?

Mr. Randy Hillier: You got it right.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Randy Hillier said I got it right.

I'm a Conservative; 64% of the people in Haldimand-Norfolk voted Progressive Conservative. We're proud to have OPG Nanticoke. To the question I'm asking: What happened? How come we didn't get a natural gas plant? We're a Conservative riding. We've got this gigantic facility. We have the assets there. This government has just signed its death warrant. We have a century and a half of natural gas experience down in Norfolk, Haldimand and Wainfleet. We drill for natural gas. We work on the lake. We've been drilling on Lake Erie since 1913. Haldimand-Wainfleet has more holes pumped in the ground than Saudi Arabia. This is what we do. We are part of a natural gas culture. We would welcome a fa-

cility like that, knowing years ago that people in western Toronto did not want that kind of a facility. We have the expertise. We have a wealth of electricity generation knowledge as well, going back 40 years.

It was some 15 years ago that I stood in this House and delivered a speech recognizing the 25th anniversary of the Ontario Hydro, as it was known then, generating station at Nanticoke. Go forward a decade and a half, and here we are: It was about two weeks ago that we recognized 40 years of stable, reliable power production, again, at four cents a kilowatt hour, and a proud workforce that up until recently numbered well over 600 employees at OPG Nanticoke: technicians, engineers, mechanical and electrical maintenance tradespeople, equipment operators, environmental technicians, managers, administrators. At one time we provided 25% of Ontario's electricity. It's the largest plant of its kind in North America and one of the largest in the world. Bill Davis opened it. Mr. Milloy is here, the House leader. We emulate Bill Davis during this debate. Bill Davis opened Nanticoke in 1973. I think he was something like two and a half, two hours and twenty minutes late, they were telling me. We had a little bit of a ceremony a week or so ago. Mr. McGuinty wants to close it, as we know.

That's the difference between Bill Davis and Dalton McGuinty. Bill Davis would open the very large, industrial, primary industry generating facilities like Nanticoke; Mr. McGuinty closes them. That's the history. That's the legacy that both parties have.

I see at Nanticoke this experience being tossed out of the window by this contemptible government—we're debating a motion about contempt. There are people in my area, and think of 400 people that aren't working there anymore—they have nothing but contempt for this government. They worked for an organization that has one sole shareholder, the Ontario government. They cannot speak out. They have to remain silent. That contempt is there; you can see that on their faces.

To the members opposite: Congratulations for destroying our coal-based electricity-generating economy. That will go down on the record.

There have been some other successes over the last 40 years. I'm part of a government that brought in SCR's, selective catalytic reduction units that get rid of the NOx. We switched over to low-sulphur coal; no more SOx, no more sulphur emissions. Work could have been done. It would have been an ideal opportunity to do research on carbon dioxide sequestration. That's kind of out of the window now.

During the blackout that wiped out this part of North America, workers there toiled around the clock to get production up again, literally moving those turbines by hand with levers to keep them from seizing up. We have a lot of reasons to thank the people who work down there at OPG.

What has this government done? It's basically said, "No thanks. Here's the boot out the door. Don't get hit by the door as you leave." I find that contemptible. People in my area have contempt. I know that doesn't specifically

address the meaning of this contempt motion, but it kind of goes with the flow of what I'm trying to explain here, and it's important to explain this amendment to the amendment of the motion that we're debating today, which is basically just about what date the report comes out. I'm not going to spend too much time on that part of it.

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So we've got the missteps in Mississauga, the omission of Oakville, and send it east down towards Kingston, examples of what I consider questionable decision-making exhibited by this government.

Oakville—I don't know whether it was mentioned so far today: Oakville was a \$1.2-billion plant. That's an awful lot of money. I think of \$1 billion and counting with respect to Big Becky, the tunnel in Niagara. I've reported in this House—again, decision-making around the transmission corridor, the latest upgrade coming out of Niagara. Hydro One seems powerless to complete this \$116-million upgrade. It's been in abeyance for six and a half years. We have Mohawk warriors on the towers; we don't have Hydro One workers on the towers. Again, I'm referring to the mayhem that we're seeing at Caledonia. Everything has been completed except a short stretch with no wires on it in the Caledonia area. More mismanagement, more questionable decision-making.

Right next to those hydro corridors as it crosses the old number 6 highway at Caledonia, somebody sabotaged the Hydro One transfer station. That was a million-dollar fire—again, the mayhem at Caledonia, the lack of action and decision-making on the part of this government. We've got to get to the bottom of that. I've asked questions about that. I've asked questions recently in estimates. Very recently I've asked questions going back to 250 years of land claims. We'll see if we get any response to the estimates committee on that one.

I've wrapped up, Speaker. I concur that there's contempt in this House. I think someone has to resign.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I am happy to be joining this debate. I only wish we were debating the healthy home tax credit, something that is going to mean an incredible difference to the seniors in every community in the province of Ontario. But unfortunately, because of a motion that has been put on the floor by a member of the official opposition, the member from Cambridge, we are now mired in that discussion.

Let me start by simply saying that I've seen serving since 1995. I don't think it will be a surprise to anyone on any side of this House that I am an avowed, without-a-doubt partisan. I believe in the policies of the Liberal government that I represent. I believe that the people I represent in the city of Sudbury believe in those policies.

But I'm not unlike anybody else in this House. There are partisans on the other side of the House as well. Each and every one is partisan. Each and every one believes our point of view is the correct point of view. Each and every one of us shares something else in common: We're

called "honourable." It is "the honourable member" for a particular riding that the Speaker refers to. I think "honourable" is a very, very important title.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock.

I'd like to remind the official opposition that the government has behaved quite well today and has tried to listen, and they've been respectful. I can't say that for you, so I'm going to lower the boom pretty soon if we don't have a little bit of listening. This is a very serious matter. The people of Ontario want to hear it. They want to make a decision. If I can't hear it, maybe some of the others are having trouble hearing it. I'm going to start naming people very shortly. Enough is enough. Thank you.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate the advice you give to the members of the opposition. I understand that the members of the opposition want to heckle. This is a part of this place. But I think in this instance, this is such a serious matter that we've embarked upon that we must remind ourselves—and that's why I start off with this, Speaker—that the people of Ontario sent us here to represent their particular point of view. They sent us here because they wanted us to represent what they believe is in the best interests for them and the rest of Ontario.

The title "honourable" carries with it incredible responsibility. We are mandated by the privilege of being elected to office to act in that way, to act in a way that is befitting the confidence that the people have put in us. With that responsibility comes the option, at some point in time, that we have to make decisions. Those decisions are, do we do what is politically expedient or do we do what is in the best interests of the people of Ontario?

We're here debating a sub-amendment to an amendment, then we're going to be debating the amendment to the main motion, and then we're going to be debating the main motion. We have the privilege in this House of spending 20 minutes of the House's time debating each of these, this motion and these amendments. A simple calculation: 20 times three is 60. Sixty minutes is an hour. There are 106 of us who can speak to this. That works out to roughly 21 sessional days. So the people of Ontario, unfortunately, have the prospect of us debating this for the next 21 sessional days, and at the end of the time, there will be a possible vote. But the motion and the procedure that is allowed is that any one of 106 of us can entertain an amendment and put forth an amendment to this motion. We can only debate one amendment at a time. We can only debate one sub-amendment at a time. But each of us is entitled to spend 20 minutes on each sub-amendment, each amendment and, of course, finally, the main motion. I don't know that the people of Ontario think that is an honourable way to use our time, because effectively what this motion and the amendment and the sub-amendment have done—and it is no surprise to anyone in this House, because we've lived it now for two

days—is, we've shut down the business of the House. We have shut down the people's business. We have, in fact, moved away from what I believe honourable members should be doing, and that's debating that which is important to the people of Ontario.

I'd like to go back to what happened last week. Both new members aren't here, but Catherine Fife from Kitchener-Waterloo, representing the NDP, and Steve Del Duca from Vaughan walked into this House as new members. I think that reminded each and every one of us of the privilege that we have. I saw the joy and the happiness on Catherine's face as she walked in and on Steve's face as he walked in. I looked at their families and I saw the happiness in their families. They were representing the people, their constituents that had voted them into office. They came in here, as we have when we were elected, with hopes and aspirations that they have for the people that voted them into office.

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This isn't what they ran for office for. This isn't what you ran for office for. This isn't what I ran for office for. This isn't what our constituents elected us to do.

It's important for the people of Ontario that we just review why we're here, very simply, because the people of Ontario—and I'll talk about the phone calls I've received over the course of the last day or so later on.

During estimates, the estimates committee requested from the Minister of Energy documents pertaining to the gas plants. There was a Speaker's ruling that told this House that the three House leaders must come together and find a solution and that those documents must be released. The Minister of Energy and the government complied with what the Speaker had ruled—complied—and, by the required date, released 36,000 pages of documents. All the documents associated to those gas plants were released.

So what happened? The Speaker ruled. The estimates committee asked—you know what? Committees are very powerful in the Legislature, and they are respected. The Speaker is very powerful, and he is respected; the Speaker is respected. So the government complied, lived up to what the Speaker had asked of us, and released 36,000 pages of documents. Then, on a further ruling, the Speaker indicated that the member for Cambridge could move forward with the motion that he has put forward.

So I don't understand totally why we're debating something when what was asked of the Minister of Energy and of the government was given to the Speaker and to the opposition parties. In fact, it was done in a very sequential, logical way so that both opposition parties could follow and read the sequential factor as it played through these different documents. But the member from Cambridge submitted the motion.

Sometimes there are unintended consequences to our actions because they're not well thought through. I would suggest in this instance that the unintended consequences were not clearly thought through by the member from Cambridge or the official opposition. Because what has happened? Remember, after the Minister of Energy has

lived up to his responsibilities fully and totally as ruled on upon by the Speaker, the House has come to a halt. We are debating this motion. The people's business has stopped. But I think the most serious unintended consequence of all of this is that at the end of the day, the reputation of an individual may be at stake here. I suggest to you that that's not what any of us here, as honourable members, would ever have intended with this motion. So I'm suggesting that we try to look at a way out of this so that the people's business can take place again.

What is it? I think I've been around negotiations, I think I've been around politics long enough to know that if you don't find a quick solution, positions become entrenched, debate declines, it becomes ugly and what we do then is demean the definition of what "honourable" is in this Legislature. We demean the House, but most of all, we single out a member, a member who quite frankly, in my estimation, does not deserve to be singled out.

I know the Minister of Energy. I have worked with the Minister of Energy. I know him to be of impeccable character. He is a dedicated politician. He is a loving father and husband. He is a community activist, an innovative lawyer, a person who quite frankly has transformed some of the legislation in the province of Ontario to become some of the strongest legislation in all of Canada. In a previous role, I worked with him quite closely on drafting and revising certain pieces of legislation. I found him to be a man of the highest integrity.

I suggest to all of us in this House that as we move forward to a solution, hopefully sooner rather than later, we think about what our actions do—unintended as they may be, but the final result of our actions.

We move forward. I am a partisan, as I said. I will defend my fellow member with whatever legal tools we have in this House. So far, I have another 40 minutes after this 20 that I'm using to debate the sub-amendment. At another time, I will spend 20 minutes talking about the amendment, and then I'll spend another 20 minutes talking about the main motion. Maybe by that time, we will have others who will put forth amendments and sub-amendments, and I will be speaking to them, because I know one thing: I was taught by a father who wasn't highly schooled but very, very educated that the only thing we really own in life is our name, and we do everything possible to protect our name. I'll tell you that I know that that Minister of Energy is an individual who does not deserve to have his name besmirched in any way by this House for whatever reason, and I will do whatever is necessary to ensure that that doesn't happen.

In conclusion, it is very, very important that we find a way out of this. There is absolutely no question that I believe there should be dialogue between the three parties to find a solution—and there is a solution. No matter how entrenched positions become, there is always a solution. Speaker, you know that from your days in labour. Labour and industry have two opposing views. If it results in a strike, eventually the strike ends. We have something very, very similar here.

I believe it is incumbent upon us, as honourable members, to find a solution to this issue so that we can move forward and start to talk about the people's business again. So I urge the House leaders or whomever to try to find that solution, move towards resolutions of this particular motion.

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It would be easy if, in fact, the member from Cambridge was able to withdraw this motion, but he can't now. It's gone too far. There has been debate in the House, so withdrawal of the motion is not a possibility. But what is a possibility is a compromise motion that does not in any way, shape or form infer anything negative about a member in this particular House. I would hope that somehow, as we move forward, we find that sooner rather than later.

Let me talk, in summation, about a few of the people who have phoned me. One is a guy called Chris. He lives in Sudbury. He said, "I was watching question period. There was no question period. You guys were talking about some motion. I didn't understand anything, but I knew you weren't talking about what I sent you down there to do. So whatever you have to do, make sure you start talking about the healthy home tax credit." He said that because he's a senior, and he's not a rich senior, but he'd like to do some renovations and he'd like a tax credit. That's a real person, folks. Those are people we represent. It doesn't make any difference whether we're on this side or that side; those are the types of people we represent.

There was another call from a woman. Her name was Dianne. She said, "I'm hearing that there's a lot of name-calling. What's going on down there? They're calling people different names back and forth." I tried to explain to her what the motion was all about, and she said to me, "I voted for you because I wanted you to try your hardest to make sure you made a difference in my life. How does this make a difference in my life?"

You know what? As honourable members, maybe we should be asking ourselves: How does this makes a difference in the lives of the people we represent, and how are we going to ensure that we get back on track and find a way to get rid of this motion so that we can go and continue to do the people's business?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Huron-Bruce—and I hope her fellow members don't hold another caucus meeting while she's speaking. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand up today to join this debate, and I'd like to do so by quoting the Premier from today's Globe and Mail. Essentially, he was stated as saying, "I'm hoping the opposition will have their fun and come to their senses." Well, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to tell you that there's nothing fun about this.

They say this is a historic moment in Queen's Park. Sadly enough, I find myself disappointed to be participating in it because, really, going back to the word "sensible," the only sensible thing is to continue with this

debate so that we can justify to the Chair that this motion needs to be voted on positively, so it goes on to the finance committee so that we can deal with it in its proper venue, so that, as a chamber, we can get back to the business of the day, where we should be debating bills, working through legislation and, most of all, our committees should be up and running. Instead, we are here listening and trying to figure out why this Liberal government has shown a total disregard for the workings of this Legislature and, in turn, a total and complete disregard for the taxpayers of Ontario.

It's a sad day when the Liberal government is willing to sacrifice one of their own in the Minister of Energy to hide these documents from the members of the Legislature and the public. It's also sad when we can confirm that these decisions were made for political gains and not necessarily for the good of the Ontario people.

The motivation was clear behind the cancellation of the Mississauga gas plant last year. The Liberal Party and their backroom campaign operatives saw that they were behind in the polls. Mr. Speaker, what did they do? They made an abrupt decision to cancel the Mississauga gas plant.

But here's what I find troubling: In the estimates committee, the Minister of Energy admittedly said that the decision to cancel the Mississauga gas plant was made by the Liberal campaign team. But now it is interesting that, in the tens of thousands of documents released, there are no emails from the Liberal campaign team, there are no emails from the Premier's office, and there are no emails from the former Minister of Energy or his staff—very interesting. Perhaps those emails were in the 2,000-odd documents that were either fully or partially redacted, or perhaps those emails were in a group of documents categorized as “63 pages redacted, not relevant.”

I don't understand how members opposite can stand and say with a straight face that all the documents were released when clearly they have not been. We respectfully ask that this House and all the elected MPPs be the ones to decide if these pages are relevant or not. That's why we're elected, and that's why we are debating this today.

I think it's quite rich for the government House leader, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the various Liberal backbenchers to all say that the documents have been produced without redaction, when clearly they haven't. Speaker, I don't know whether you've ever participated in any spinning classes. Clearly I haven't, and I don't intend to; I hear it's brutal. But I think some people along the floor have spent too much time spinning.

I want to draw your attention to the Hansard from yesterday when the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was speaking. She said, “But I cannot imagine an Ontarian who would want to have a government in place that would not be able to say, ‘We made this decision. It was not the right decision. We've listened to the community; we've listened to the experts. It was not the right decision, so we are going to correct that.’”

In addition to that, yesterday in *The Toronto Sun*, under an article that was deemed “Prem Admits to Bad Gas,” the Premier was quoted as saying, “We think it's right for us to listen to communities when they express their concerns.”

Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to say, “Seriously?” On behalf of all of rural Ontario, I'd like to say to that Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to the Premier and to all the backbenchers essentially three words: industrial wind turbines.

But back to the Mississauga gas plant and the politically motivated decision that we have in front of us. My EA was one of the many people who spent all day and night on Monday and Tuesday combing through these documents. I want to say thank you to all the PC staffers who dedicated their time and energy. They care. We care enough to dig around and dig through and find out the true numbers for the cost of these gas plants, as well as the motivation behind it.

In the days immediately leading up to and immediately following the announced closure of the Mississauga gas plant, there are emails from the Ministry of Energy's legal services branch and the OPA where they indicate that Liberal candidates in the Mississauga and Etobicoke areas were looking for briefing notes and talking points on the closure. These emails indicate that the legal services team at the ministry were scrambling. They were scrambling to produce the requested documents because—guess what?—it was a snap decision. It was a decision that was not caucused. It was a decision where briefing notes and talking points for closing the facility were not prepared in advance. This is not the way a government should be operating. In fact, emails indicated that the ministry officials had no idea that this was happening. They were completely taken off guard.

Speaker, we know the costs of this closure have been tallied at \$190 million for the Mississauga gas plant. The message to stress to everyone watching today, to the media and to the rest of this House, is that this money is coming out of the pockets of Ontario's taxpayers. It's unacceptable. This money that is coming out of Ontario taxpayers' pockets is to save the seats of four Liberal members: two cabinet ministers, specifically, and two backbenchers. I really don't think Ontario families got much value for their dollar there. It's absolutely shameful, and now, with the cost of closing the Oakville power plant rising to \$450 million—

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Mr. Robert Bailey: Plus.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:—plus, the people of Oakville and across Ontario need to ask if the seat of one Liberal backbencher is really worth \$450 million. Mr. Speaker, we see these costs of the Liberal debacles continuing to climb well over \$640 million, and we have to look at the value for money. Can anybody tell me why these three backbenchers and two cabinet ministers are worth over \$100 million each?

I've said this in the House before: If I was a Liberal candidate running in rural Ontario last election, I would

wonder why my seat wasn't as valuable as urban seats. I just can't imagine how it feels to sit across the floor at this stage of the game. It's a sad, sad day, because when it comes down to this motion—just as the member from Nepean—Carleton pointed out this morning, it's all about choices. It's all about the choices we make and the consequences that you have to live with. The PCs, I'm proud to say—our leader, Tim Hudak, and our entire PC caucus are choosing to do the right thing. We're choosing to do our legislative duty. We're choosing to stand up for the people of Ontario by asking the minister to table the documents that have yet to surface.

There are documents that date back to May. The Standing Committee on Estimates have asked over and over again—I subbed in, actually, to the estimates committee on a couple of occasions, and I just sat there somewhat amazed. I don't know, really, if it was poor advice or just plain arrogance that the minister failed to comply with the legislative directive. And yet, even today, the minister continues to fail to comply with the Speaker's own directive, handing us thousands of redacted documents. It is sad.

Again, I repeat, I don't know—I can't imagine how it feels to be sitting opposite on the floor, because—there's a part of me that genuinely feels bad for the Minister of Energy. The weight's getting pretty heavy. I mean, he was not the Minister of Energy at the time of the two closures. It's interesting; the closures were made when the current Minister of Economic Development and Innovation was at the helm, but in reality, today, who's taking all the responsibility for it? The Minister of Energy apparently seems to be the sacrificial lamb, much like David Caplan was in the eHealth days. If I was a Liberal minister or a backbencher, I would wonder if my leader was going to throw me under the bus next.

But let's get back to the \$650 million. My riding of Huron—Bruce has lost thousands of good-paying jobs. The Liberal government has closed down Walkerton jail and the Bluewater Youth Centre. They've said, "Sorry; you can't have the money we promised you," to the Wingham hospital, as well as the Kincardine hospital.

I have people calling into my office every day who are looking for programs for developmentally disabled children, long-term care, home care for their parents, hip replacements for relatives. People are calling in because they need help, because they can't keep the heat and lights on in their home. What are we to tell them? "Sorry, the Liberals needed \$650 million, which could have gone to essential services, to cancel gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville to save the seats of five Liberal members." It's absolutely shameful, and a sad moment in Ontario's provincial history.

Justifying \$650 million-plus just doesn't fly with the people of Huron—Bruce and it doesn't fly with me. Constituents across this province expect more from this government, and they deserve better. Constituents deserve a government that can stand up, stand tall and make bold, transparent, accountable decisions that really make a difference for our economy, for our cost of living and

for the future of our children. To the Liberal members who continue to say we're derailing business: Simply I say, shame on you. You are the ones spinning out of control. Because we need to talk about this. This is Ontario's people's business. If I was just one of that staggering number of 600,000 people out of work and waking up without a job, I would think it was my business, too.

Members of this Liberal government have shown time and time again that they have zero regard for taxpayer dollars, from the \$1 billion wasted on eHealth to Ornge, and now this. This government shows time and time again they are in no position to be holding the purse strings for the province of Ontario.

Speaker, when I had the opportunity to see the Premier's comments yesterday at his good-news stop in Oakville, seriously, I thought I was watching a music video from circa 2000. It was like I was watching a Britney Spears song all over again: "Oops! ... I Did It Again." Anybody know that song? Yes, think of that tune. Essentially, the Premier said—and I paraphrase just a touch—"Hey, we built some power plants. We only screwed up a couple, so we did okay, right?" Wrong, Premier McGuinty; wrong.

This government has tried to use every trick in the book to avoid disclosure of the documents pertaining to the cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants, and it still continues today. If I'm to go back to the closures of the Mississauga and Oakville plants, then I must reference the then-Minister of Energy's statement in a press conference in Oakville on October 7. That Oakville plant was not going to be constructed, and in the Q&A, the minister said, "The main reason we are not moving ahead with the construction of this plant (Oakville) is because circumstances have changed and we no longer need the power it would have provided. The need for reliability continues to exist and we believe this can be met with a transmission solution."

Interjection: What was his name?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: What was his name? Yes, it's interesting. I'll let you guys throw that name out. But I find it very, very interesting.

What is even more interesting is that this contradicts a statement from the ministry's later Q&A document: "Additional electricity is needed to supply the" southwest "GTA. The timing depends on a number of factors; our best estimate at this point is that it will be required by 2017-18."

Speaker, I ask the government opposite: Do we or do we not need the power in southwest GTA? Nobody has any answers, but there's got to be some more information that we can access in the documents that have been redacted.

In a briefing document from the OPA to the Premier's office, dated September 13, 2010, that slipped through in the 36,000 pieces of documentation that came through, it states, and the OPA is telling the Premier's office, that "The recession has reduced the demand forecast"—and I can tell you why that is: All the manufacturing is leaving this province—Volvo in Huron—Bruce; ED Smith is

packing up and moving south next spring. It's a sad state of affairs. That's why there's a reduced need for power, at this stage of the game anyway. But interestingly enough, that note in that briefing document that went to the Premier's office said that we still need power in the GTA.

All I can say to that is, what the heck is going on? If ever this case of *prima facie* needs to be respected and properly dealt with—it is an absolute example of mismanagement and an absolute example of why this motion must be upheld and passed along to the finance committee so that we can get to the bottom of it.

I have additional good quotes from other documents my staff and PC staffers went through, and quite frankly, they look pretty damning. Just to give you a snippet of what they found before we close off for the day, I would like to quote James Hinds at OPG. James Hinds says, "As I am plowing through the slide deck"—interestingly enough, the slide decks we received had a lot of titles, but

the body of the slide deck was completely whited out or removed.

Interjection: Redacted.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, that's the word; it was redacted. That's right.

Interestingly enough, when he went through the slide deck, things were not redacted and he was particularly struck by two statements on slide nine, namely, that "replacement projects might cost the ratepayer more than our worst-case scenario in the event that it were to go to litigation ... mathematically true." To note, the worst-case scenario was deemed to be \$1.2 billion.

Speaker, there's so much more work to do, and we have to get to the bottom of it with the finance committee.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener—Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest—Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering—Scarborough East / Pickering—Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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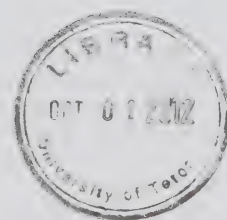
Première session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 27 September 2012

Jeudi 27 septembre 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 September 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 septembre 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 26, 2012, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion by Mr. Leone arising from the Speaker's ruling of September 13, 2012.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate. The member from Huron–Bruce has the floor.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand this morning to pick up where I left off yesterday. It's with sadness, as everybody has expressed, that we have to carry on with this motion, but there are very, very compelling reasons why the motion must be upheld, and this issue must be passed along to our financial committee, because we have to get back to business in this House.

I feel I have very relevant information to share with you that further supports the whole fact that this has just been absolute nonsense and we need to get to the bottom of it. The only manner in which to do it properly is to pass it along to the committee.

As I said yesterday, we have had folks that have spent day and night poring through the 36,000 pieces of documentation that the Liberal government provided. We recognize that much has been redacted or completely blanked out, and quite frankly, the excuse that, "Oh, the opposite page or the wrong side of the page was scanned," is absolute nonsense. I say to the good people of Ontario: Please, stick to your gut feeling. Recognize what's spin and what's fact.

In that light, I'd like to share with you some more factual information that pertains to this very serious issue. My EA, Ashley Hammill, was one of the team members who worked through all this documentation earlier this week, and she has provided me with some, quite frankly, very damning information that supports the whole fact that the Liberal government is out of control, they've totally mismanaged this situation, and it needs to go to committee.

To pick up where I left off yesterday, I want to share an excerpt from Michael Lyle at OPA and his comments on how to handle media. Quite specifically, he says, "Thinking about this some more it might be better to

fudge who is actually engaged in ongoing negotiations with TransCanada Energy by just starting with 'Discussions are ongoing....' Again, here's blatant contempt. There's blatant, blatant intent here to fudge the facts with that quote from Michael Lyle from the OPA.

Another quote from a Liberal insider: "If the government or OPA kills the project" in "(Oakville) they will be on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars for incurred expenses and lost profits." I'm going to repeat that: "They will be on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars for incurred expenses and lost profits"—absolutely disgusting.

Speaker, this is one of my favourite quotes that was taken from emails and information: "Hi Deputy, I hope you got the debrief on Oakville. From my perspective it went as well as it could have. Can't go wrong for TV when politicians make an announcement and a room full of people" stand up "in cheers of joy and applause. Financially" it's going to "be muddy in the papers tomorrow. Province could be on the hook for millions and the minister wouldn't talk about it. How did it go with Hydro One?"

Speaker, as you can see, the case for contempt is very, very clear.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: It is with sadness that I rise this morning to speak on the motion from Mr. Leone, the member from Cambridge.

I listened attentively for the past two days to the various members from all three parties. The two opposition parties focused on the government's failure to fully disclose all the documents related to the Oakville and Mississauga facilities in a timely manner. The official opposition party continued to misuse the Legislature to argue that the minister continues to hide or conceal documents related to the Mississauga plant.

As a rookie member from Scarborough–Agincourt, I'm concerned over the tone and the language used by some members of the opposition parties to attack a member of the Legislature, who happens to be a minister of the crown. I'm also concerned about how the three parties will move forward after the conclusion of this motion, Mr. Speaker.

The people of Ontario have spoken not just last October, but also more recently at the by-elections in Kitchener–Waterloo and in the city of Vaughan. The people of Ontario have elected 107 of us to serve to our best ability with integrity, transparency and a commit-

ment to Ontario. They also want us to protect public health, public education, our environment, natural resources and ensure safety for all.

Similar to the member from Cambridge, I too came from an academic background before entering provincial politics. For the past two days, I've reviewed numerous documents about the cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville facilities.

This is what I've learned from my research on the cancellation and relocation of both facilities, Mr. Speaker: Since 2003, we've rebuilt our electricity system. We added 10,000 megawatts of new clean generation, including six—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How do you like your hydro bill so far?

Ms. Soo Wong: No, let me speak, okay? That's not respectful.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins—James Bay, come to order, please.

Ms. Soo Wong:—six new gas facilities and 5,000 kilometres of transmission lines. We have invested almost \$30 billion from the public and private sectors and created thousands of jobs. That's on the record, Mr. Speaker.

We have made a commitment to Ontarians to close coal-fired generation, a North American first—again, showing leadership, showing vision. As a registered nurse, I recognize the health concerns associated with the burning of coal. The US Environmental Protection Agency, better known as the EPA, stated that the burning of coal causes premature deaths in people with heart and lung disease. It also worsens respiratory problems such as coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath, triggering thousands of asthma attacks across America. Furthermore, the burning of coal is a leading cause of smog, and it contributes to climate change.

As a government, we made the decision to move away from coal and renew the electricity system, and that is the right thing to do. Our priority is to ensure our homes and businesses have the energy they need, and it is available whenever they require it.

0910

Let us not forget the infamous blackout of 2003, where darkness affected thousands of Ontarians from Toronto all the way up to North Bay. How many people have been affected by the 2003—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would just like to remind all members of the House that yesterday went very well, that when the speaker was speaking, everybody was listening. I think it applies to all speakers from both sides of the House that you are being given the opportunity to be heard.

Those who are heckling, I'd ask you to stop, because the next time I stand up, I'll be warning you. Thank you.

Carry on.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Speaker.

Demand for energy is especially high in the greater Toronto area. Hence, the government decided to build

these two natural gas facilities in Oakville and Mississauga. After lengthy consultation and review, it began to look like the facilities in Oakville and Mississauga may not be required for our energy plans, as previously thought. These kinds of decisions came before I became a member of provincial Parliament, and we have to look at and reflect on what has happened.

At the same time, there was significant opposition to locating the gas facilities in the Mississauga and Oakville areas. The government listened carefully to the community. We also reviewed the security of our energy supply and determined that these facilities could be relocated elsewhere in Ontario, and this is exactly what the government has done.

The Premier, on September 26, spoke at the Oakville Curling Club and acknowledged that “we didn't get it right,” on the Mississauga and the Oakville power facilities.

The decision that the government made is no different than the previous ones. In my research on the previous governments' conduct in decision-making, this is what I learned. In 1991, the then NDP government cancelled—cancelled—the Red Hill Creek Expressway. This proposed expressway is located in the region of Hamilton-Wentworth. For 25 years, the region has been trying to build this expressway. Only three months after the NDP took office, it cancelled the Red Hill Creek Expressway. This construction project was approved by a joint board decision in 1985. This decision was upheld by cabinet on March 12, 1987, and by the Supreme Court of Ontario in 1987.

The NDP government of the day spent \$70 million when they cancelled the Red Hill Creek Expressway. At the time of the cancellation, the former member of Don Valley West, Mr. Turnbull, stated on October 1, 1991, that: “Governments have an obligation to make decisions that are seen to serve the best interests of its citizens.” This statement by Mr. Turnbull clearly illustrates that governments should make decisions in the best interests of their constituents—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: How many days before the election did that happen?

Ms. Soo Wong: It doesn't matter. The fact is that Mr. Turnbull stated that we need to make decisions in the best interests of our constituents.

Our government did listen to the people and elected officials in the city of Mississauga and Oakville. Susan Hyatt, a member of Citizens for Clean Air, a group representing Mississauga and Oakville ratepayer associations, recently stated: “You have to look at the \$40 million in the context of the safety and health issues ... and the potential for injury to our families, our homes and our businesses if there was an explosion ... or a train derailment at that site.

“That would have been catastrophic compared to \$40 million....Was it a good decision to cancel the plant? I feel it was a good decision.”

I challenge anyone in this Legislature to say that they do not listen to their constituents, or, as elected officials,

not try to do what Mr. Turnbull said: Governments should serve the best interests of our citizens.

I find the hypocrisy of the official opposition party in the tone and language used in debating the motion—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, is “hypocrisy” a parliamentary word?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I listened to the member carefully and I will rule that’s not a point of order. Carry on.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find the hypocrisy of the official opposition party in the tone and language used in debating the motion by the member from Cambridge—let me bring some history—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw the comment.

Ms. Soo Wong: Okay, I withdraw.

Let me bring some history to the Legislature. On July 11, 1995, in an interview with the *Toronto Star*, the former Chair of Management Board, the Honourable Dave Johnson, indicated the cancellation of the Eglinton and Sheppard lines in the city of Toronto, even though the government of the day had spent approximately \$260 million. About \$123 million was already spent on the subway project, including the design and construction of two huge diggers to be used for boring tunnels beneath the road. About \$136 million was already spent on the Sheppard line before it was cancelled.

The former mayor of Toronto, Mr. Lastman, commented that the building of the two subway lines and two additional lines would create 27,000 jobs. Hence, the former PC government not only failed to create jobs in the city of Toronto at that time; it also failed the people of Toronto. I know my residents in the riding of Scarborough—Agincourt would not be in the current traffic gridlock and transportation problems if the previous PC government had had the leadership and vision in the 1990s to address transportation needs in the city of Toronto. So let’s call it what it is.

These two examples demonstrate how previous governments, led by the other two parties in this Legislature, have cancelled projects that have had significant investment done. These actions are no different than the current decision in the cancellation and relocation of the Mississauga and Oakville facilities. All of the decisions have been made based on listening to constituents, reviewing new and existing information or evidence, and assessing new alternatives that may prove to be better in the long run. That’s what we are asked to do in this House.

All three parties recognize the concerns—recognize them; it’s not new—raised by the constituents of the city of Mississauga and Oakville, and all made the same commitment in the 2011 election to cancel these facilities.

According to Hansard, I believe the member from Halton said on June 1, 2010, “The people of Oakville ... don’t want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them.”

The leader of the official opposition party spoke to the *Globe and Mail* on September 25, 2011, and said,

“We’ve opposed these” two “projects in Oakville and Mississauga.”

On October 7, 2010, the member from Toronto—Danforth told *Inside Halton*, “I don’t agree with the Oakville power plant. I don’t think it is necessary.”

The leader of the third party, on October 18, 2010, stated, “The New Democrats actually have thought for a long time that that plant should never have been built, and we have said so.”

So the accusations by the opposition parties of buying votes for members in the city of Mississauga and the Halton area are totally inaccurate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We never would have built it.

Ms. Soo Wong: Well, it depends on who you say it to. The Ontario Liberal Party made a commitment in response to mounting community concerns that, if re-elected, the government would relocate the Mississauga facility to another location—relocate, not just cancel, okay? We’re not just concerned about cancelling the plants, but making sure we have the electricity system and making sure there are also jobs attached to the cancellation.

0920

Both the opposition parties, the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democratic Party, had made similar commitments during the course of the 2011 campaign. Let’s tell it as it is, okay? The cancellation and relocation of the Mississauga and Oakville facilities by the government is not a surprise to anyone in this House. The government clearly stated during the 2011 election that it would relocate this facility if re-elected. To date, our government has fulfilled our commitment to the people of Mississauga and Halton, and that is the right thing to do.

I recall the debates on the cancellation of both the Red Hill Creek Expressway and the Eglinton and Sheppard lines. I was a young registered nurse at that time, Mr. Speaker, and I’m telling you, I was following this House even then. At no time during those debates did I hear vicious, malicious character assassination of a member of the Legislature and a minister of the crown. I don’t recall hearing derogatory language used against a former Chair of Management Board, Mr. Johnson, nor did I hear a character attack on Mr. Pouliot, then the Minister of Transportation under former Premier Bob Rae. These ministers were treated with the respect that they, as individuals in their position, deserved. To date, the choice of words used by the official opposition party against the Minister of Energy cannot be used outside this Legislature, and this is what I’m concerned about.

The opposition parties accused the Minister of Energy of not releasing the requested documents in a timely manner. Let me remind the members in the Legislature what the Auditor General of Ontario said on September 5 in the public accounts committee: “Some of this information could be subject to client-solicitor privilege, or even if we were to get it, in my opinion”—this is the opinion of the Auditor General—“it could be damaging to the province’s negotiating position.”

What does this mean? If the Minister of Energy had released the documents at the time requested by the opposition parties, we would have compromised our position and jeopardized our ability to seek a fair deal for the province. In addition, it may cause further liability for this province and put the province in a much worse position. I am completely puzzled why the opposition parties would want to compromise this province in this manner. We all know the Minister of Energy released the requested documents immediately following the conclusion of the negotiation and complied with the ruling of the Speaker. In my short time at the Legislature and my brief encounters with the Minister of Energy, I find him to be a man of great integrity, commitment and dedication to the people of London West and to this great province. He has served with distinction as a former Attorney General for four years and an honourable member of this Legislature for nine years. He deserves the same respect that was paid to the minister that I've spoken of earlier. The words spoken in this Legislature by the official opposition parties were highly disrespectful and unacceptable to the people of this province.

As a new member of this Legislature, it is a great disappointment for me to witness this type of schoolyard behaviour and bullying and disrespect to the Legislature. One wonders why the official opposition party has come to such a low level of behaviour in comparison to the glory days of the former Premier Bill Davis.

My remarks on the motion by the member from Cambridge—let us all remember the words of Mr. Turnbull, the former MPP from Don Valley West: "Governments have an obligation to make decisions that are seen to serve the best interests of its citizens."

I also want to share a lesson from my mentor, the Honourable Gerry Phillips, who served Ontario with great distinction for 24 years. He said to me, "There will be a time at the Legislature that you will have to make some tough decisions, Soo. And this will require you to do the right thing." I believe the cancellation and relocation of the Mississauga and Oakville plant facilities is doing the right thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's the beginning of the hockey season, Mr. Speaker. This is a rare fall, of course, and I'm not referring to the NHL strike; I'm referring to the fact that here it is late September, and the Leafs aren't being reported as winning the Stanley Cup already. So it does put a different perspective on hockey this season.

But it reminds me of when I was a kid. We used to head back very early in the winter, far too early, to the creek. We would pick out the shallowest part of the creek, which had some still water in it, and the ice was pretty thin when we started playing hockey. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the government here, using the facts they are, is skating on some pretty thin ice themselves. So it reminds me of the hockey season that's starting.

I would remind the House of the motion that we're debating here today. I'll just go over it; it's not too long: "that this House directs the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to table immediately with the Clerk of the House all remaining documents ordered by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012..." We're not talking about whether the plants should be cancelled or shouldn't be cancelled or whether they made the right decision; we're asking how that decision was made.

If the government is so proud of the fact that they closed that plant, Mr. Speaker, then why not release the documents and prove that they have made the right decision? Rather than give us 36,000 pages—25,000 or so or at least 25% of them, I understand, are redacted, crossed out, blank. I don't think anyone in their right mind would suggest that these documents have been delivered in a fulfilled state. It certainly doesn't fulfil the spirit of this motion. If the government wanted to act with integrity and prove the fact that they made the right decision, they would release those documents in full.

I understand that the other word I was going to use, Mr. Speaker, you've ruled out of order, so I won't use that word, given your finding.

I should comment a little bit on the coal-fired plants, which the previous speaker was talking about, and the power failure. The power failure in Ontario that she referred to, of course, occurred because of a failure in a plant in Ohio. It had nothing to do with the Ontario circuit. That blackout, which did affect a huge portion of Ontario, had nothing to do with the Ontario power grid. It had to do with the grid in Ohio, which backed up into Ontario and caused that failure.

Finally, I would comment that—she talked about closing the coal-fired plants. Yes, the only coal-fired plant that has been closed in Ontario is the Lakeview plant, and Elizabeth Witmer was Minister of Energy when that plant was closed. So the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario is the only party in this Legislature that has ever closed a coal-fired plant in the province of Ontario.

The Liberals, in the election of 2003, promised to close all coal-fired plants by 2007. In that same election, we promised to close them in 2014. The Liberals then reversed themselves and promised to close them in 2009. They reversed themselves again somewhat later and said they'd close them in 2012. They reversed themselves yet again when it was appropriate for their purposes and came to the same decision that we had come to originally: that the coal-fired plants would be closed in 2014. It took them a long time to get to that position.

In listening to this debate over the past week or so, over the last three or four days in the House, it strikes me that there's a real disconnect, a real failure to communicate. That line, of course, came from a great movie, *Hud*, starring Paul Newman. There was a failure to communicate in that movie, and it seems to me that we're talking about two different things in this House. The Liberal government is trying to defend their actions in the closing of the coal plants and the closing of the Oakville plant

and the Mississauga plant, and we're trying to get to the bottom as to why those plants were closed—not the fact that they were closed, but the fact of why they were closed. We believe they were closed as a seat-saver during an election, when the decision was made.

0930

The Liberal debate seems to be around the matter of whether the plants should have been closed or not closed. The Liberal House leader put out a letter on September 24, and he talked about partisan motives for this debate in the House. I've got to say, Mr. Speaker, that when there's \$640 million of taxpayers' money at risk, there's nothing partisan about this debate. This government has always been able to blame someone else for their problems. If there's a hallmark of this government, it's the fact that they can always blame someone else. They blamed the US for unemployment. They blamed the US for the demise of our manufacturing industry. They blame the feds if something goes wrong here. They even blamed Alberta for the high exchange rate that we now enjoy in Ontario. It's sad that somebody doesn't take responsibility for their actions and that there's always someone else to blame; it's never, never their fault. This is very much your fault.

So this isn't about a partisan act; this is about integrity. I think it's about integrity, and the government is expressing itself in a way that would suggest that they fail to understand the issue. I believe you fail to understand the issue that is in front of this House, and that issue revolves around integrity. You took taxpayers' money and used it for political purposes. That in itself is a sad thing to happen in Ontario. But in doing so, you have driven up the cost of electricity. That has had a huge effect on the industry of Ontario.

In the early 1920s, 1922 or 1923, Sir Adam Beck created the hydro projects in Niagara Falls. It's interesting: If you've lived in other parts of North America, if you go and ask people what their hydro costs are, they kind of look at you funny. They don't know what hydro costs are. They know what electricity costs are, but the hydro project in Niagara Falls so dominated this province that we refer to electricity in this province as hydro. It's one of the few places in the world where that happens. So when Adam Beck was initiated—was a motivator behind the creation of the electricity generation system in Niagara Falls—it provided cheap electricity to the province of Ontario on an ongoing and consistent basis, and that created an industry; it built up an industry.

Anything that uses large quantities of electricity came to Ontario. The steel industry is an example. It's located in Hamilton, where there are no resources of coal; there are no resources of steel. Why would a steel industry locate in Hamilton without the two main components? Because Hamilton had a great port and it had access to cheap electricity costs on a consistent basis. That developed our steel industry, a steel industry that is very much in decline these days, struggling, hanging on by its fingertips, because our electricity costs are going through the roof. They're being driven up by a misguided green

energy policy, wind and solar, which we're paying huge prices for—three and four and five times what the going rate for electricity is. Projects like this, this seat-saver program, are driving up electricity costs in this province once again.

The pulp and paper industry across northern Ontario is a huge user of electricity. It's being decimated. Half the mills in northern Ontario are closed because electricity costs are out of sight. That's a sad day for Ontario. That's the kind of thing that this event, this lack of integrity, is causing in the province of Ontario.

I believe that there are a number of things that this government has to do in order to get beyond this debate.

First, in a show of good faith, they should supply the unredacted papers that prove the case that they made the right decision on closing these two plants. That's what they seem to believe. That's what all their debate talks about, how they did the right thing in closing these two plants. Then you supply us 36,000 pages, most of which are blank or crossed out, illegible. It just doesn't ring true. As the Auditor General says, it doesn't pass the sniff test.

Secondly, I think there should be a very sincere apology by the Premier to the people of Ontario. He has abused their confidence and spent their tax dollars recklessly.

Thirdly, I think the committees of this House have to be reconstituted, as the motion says, as they were on September 9—all the committees. There was some debate the other day that talked about how this project is holding up the business of the House. I can tell the people of Ontario that there's not a lot of business before the House right now. When bills are introduced for first reading, they go to printing. There's no debate time. They come in on second reading, they're debated, and then they go to committee.

But there are no committees. The government hasn't reconstituted the committees, and they don't want the committees because they don't want these kinds of issues—the committee on Ornge, the committees looking into other aspects of the Liberal government, the ones that ask questions. They're not asking them from the 30,000-foot level, as you will, as most of the debate in this House is. In committee is where they get into the weeds. They have people who are authorities in the areas come in and discuss what effect this legislation may have. The government doesn't want to hear those kinds of intimate debate in committee.

They've come up with a rather short-sighted solution in not reconstituting the committees. In 17 years here, I've never experienced a government that didn't reconstitute the committees automatically. It was never an issue; it just happened. One day there was an order that allowed the committees to continue to do their work. It never made the paper; in fact, most people in this Legislature wouldn't have known that it even happened.

It's difficult to imagine that this House will continue very much longer without reconstituting committees be-

cause there are very few bills. I think there are three bills waiting to go—three or four bills—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Four bills. Our House leader tells me there are four bills waiting to go to committee. Well, they could go to committee in a very short period of time, three or four days. They're not bills of great importance. They're not bills of great content. I guess any bill going through this House does have some importance, but these are bills that do not have a great deal of content, and they could go through the House very, very quickly with all-party agreement. To suggest that we're holding up the committees, holding up the business of the House, that argument doesn't hold water because there's no business to bring before the House.

0940

Earlier in the week, leading off the debate, the member from St. Catharines talked about how we shouldn't be picking on Minister Bentley. The previous speaker talked about the terrible things that we're saying about Minister Bentley, the Minister of Energy. I haven't heard us say anything detrimental about Chris Bentley. I think we all think he's a pretty good guy. As was pointed out yesterday, he's a family man. He's a father. He has a distinguished legal career. But he made a decision—he made a strange decision, actually—to withhold these papers, which caused this whole avalanche of events that happened.

Chris Bentley, being a former Attorney General, knew the consequences of his actions. He was asked to do that—I'm sure he was asked to do that—by his government, probably his Premier, and he knew the consequences. I doubt if any backbencher over there knew the consequences. I'll bet that half the cabinet didn't know the consequences of that decision. But as a former Attorney General, he knew.

Now, I can say a lot of nice things about Mr. Bentley; I would never use his name in a derogatory fashion. He's taking the hit. He has been thrown under the bus by this Liberal government, and not one member over there has bothered to phone a tow truck to haul the bus off him. You're letting him stay under the bus.

You could do a lot to help a fine, upstanding member of this House. You could deliver unredacted papers that prove the case that you've been trying to make for the last three or four days, but you haven't done that. You could apologize heartily to the people of Ontario for abusing your power in this House and using funds for political purposes. You could do that, which would help the Minister of Energy, but you haven't done that. You could hold committee hearings, which would defray and bring the truth to the people of Ontario and restore some integrity to this place, this Legislature, that I believe we all love so well. You could suggest that you would pay—I don't believe the Liberal Party could pay back \$650 million, but you could make some reparations along that line. You could do a lot of things to help the Minister of Energy, and you're doing none of them. You're not even phoning for a tow truck.

When you go home tonight, since the House doesn't sit on Friday; you'll have three days—Friday, Saturday, Sunday—to think about this. Look deep into your conscience. Are you doing enough to help a fine member of this House? Did you know what you were doing at the time you did it? I can tell you, the boys in the backroom knew. The boys in the backroom knew. I sat in the backbenches over there. I know how much I knew about issues that came before the House. I knew exactly what they wanted me to know. You did not know what you were doing to Chris Bentley, and now you're doing nothing to help him.

Mr. John O'Toole: He's taking the bullet.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He's under the bus, and it's a sad day. It's a sad day when that's the kind of integrity and the kind of camaraderie that rests in that party over there.

I'm almost out of time, Mr. Speaker, but the other thing that's happening is the plant is being moved to Nanticoke from Oakville—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Sorry, it's being moved to Napanee, and it should be going to Nanticoke. Nanticoke already has the lines established. There are \$200 million that are going to have to be spent on the building of power lines to bring that power to Toronto. Nanticoke already has the lines; it has a coal plant that is going to be shut down. You could replace it. You could replace it with a huge gas-fired power plant. That would be a good thing for Ontario. It would save you money. It's a willing host community, which Oakville and Mississauga were not.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: This is a very sobering and very serious debate that we're dealing with this morning, of course: the issue of contempt that's been raised against the Minister of Energy, my colleague Chris Bentley.

But first of all, this morning I'd like to start off on a more positive note to congratulate Ken Lewenza and his team at the Canadian Auto Workers and the management team of Chrysler Canada, Ford Canada and General Motors Canada in reaching collective agreements over the next four years, which will provide a great deal of stability to the auto manufacturing right here in Ontario.

Just to emphasize that point, I want to note that in a recent report that was put forward by the Royal Bank, talking about the auto sector in Ontario, they put forward a note here that says, "... assembly of light vehicles surged by more than 19% during the first seven months of 2012. New vehicle production has now virtually returned to the pre-recession levels." That is a good thing for the province of Ontario, so I just want to congratulate everybody who was involved in those negotiations.

I want to spend some time this morning—there's been a great deal of talk about political calls that are made during election campaigns, prior to a campaign or during a campaign, that may have some impact on the results of the campaign. I took some time yesterday to do a little

research on the Spadina Expressway issue, and it's interesting that, way back in the early 1960s, Metro council and the government of Ontario of course started to put together a plan to build the Spadina expressway, and it was going to be built in Toronto to move vehicles in a more effective fashion, and indeed Metro council, of course, had spent a lot of time expropriating a lot of properties and shelling out big dollars to make that happen.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Jeff Leal: And then, of course, there was a change of leadership in Ontario. Mr. Roberts announced his resignation, and then the new team came over—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, you were not here before—we've had many speakers—and there was total quietness in the House, without heckling. So I would ask you to observe that. The next time I stand, it will be a warning. Thank you.

Carry on.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, Mr. Roberts retired after a very distinguished career as Premier of the province of Ontario, and then he was succeeded by one William Grenville Davis. At that particular time, if you read a couple of the books of the day—look, I just got this one last night; interesting reading. It's Jonathan Manthorpe, *The Power and the Tories*. And in that book, of course, the advice that was provided to Mr. Davis by Dalton Camp, Ross "the boss" DeGeer, Norm "the mechanic" Atkins, Clare Westcott and others—who said, "Mr. Davis, you've got to distinguish yourself from the former administration."

Now, one of the ways they did that very, very quickly was through the suspension of the Spadina expressway, done in the summer of 1971, leading up to the campaign of 1971. In fact, I'd like to quote Mr. Davis, because he made a very interesting comment, and I'm quoting from Hansard of June 3, 1971. Mr. Davis said:

"It is our conclusion that if we are to serve adequately and sensibly the transportation needs of the Toronto area, both in the suburbs and the downtown, we must place our reliance on means and methods other than those which will encourage and proliferate the use of the passenger car as the basic means of transportation.

"In my judgment, there has been a growing evidence and accumulative experience gathered elsewhere on this continent which demonstrates the ultimate futility of giving priority to the passenger car as a means of transportation into and out of the cities.

"Further, Mr. Speaker, the government cannot help but heed the rising public anxiety and concern in questions relating to pollution and environmental control.

"I have no doubt that while the estimated cost of this expressway has doubled over the past seven years, the numbers of the general public opposed to the undertaking have multiplied many times over....I am confident that if the people of Toronto tomorrow were consulted, they

would give overwhelming approval to the decision their government has taken today."

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Interesting enough, I want to make some reference—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, on a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The member clearly is not speaking to the motion that's on the floor of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm listening very carefully and I'll make that decision.

Carry on.

Mr. Jeff Leal: The issue of seat-saver has been discussed broadly here, so I'm just putting this in some historical context. If you look at page 209 of Manthorpe's book *The Power and the Tories*, he talks about the 1971 election and how the Tories won five additional—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I will warn the opposition one more time. The next time I stand up, I'll warn individual members. I've had co-operation all morning and I expect it to continue.

Carry on.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, when you look at page 209, the facts are clear. The Conservatives in that election in 1971 won five additional seats in Toronto—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Halton, come to order.

Mr. Jeff Leal: —and consequently, where were those five seats? Within the Spadina expressway route that was cancelled—very interesting.

Let's move forward to 1999. I want to talk about a very interesting individual, Mr. Schad. Mr. Schad is a multi-millionaire, has the Schad Foundation; he has been very involved in a wide variety of issues over many years. As we came up to the 1999 campaign, he was very concerned about what he considered a very barbaric spring bear hunt.

Let me tell you what happened there. I'm sure Mr. Giorno and Leslie Noble and others huddled in room 210 right down the hallway up there to decide what they were going to do. If you recall, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Schad had threatened that he was going to run a multimedia campaign in southern Ontario showing very graphic pictures of the spring bear hunt. What happened? Pow—they decided to suspend the spring bear hunt.

Mr. John O'Toole: Point of order?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order. The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Speaker, with all due respect, he's referring to documents that none of us are privy to and some of them are dating back before 1970. I would ask that you require him to share these documents with the House, to validate these arguments he's making.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will advise the member, who is a long-standing member of this Legislature, that that's not a point of order because

there's no requirement to share documents in this particular situation.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would advise my friend from Durham that he just has to contact Andrew McNaught, a research officer with the legislative library; I'm sure he will give him the same information I have. The library will certainly provide a large number of books; any member can go there and get them.

Let me talk about Mr. Schadt for a moment—a very interesting guy. He decided that he's going to get rid of the spring bear hunt in the province of Ontario; threatened the government of the day that he would run a multimedia campaign, particularly in urban Ontario, which perhaps may have had some impact on the electoral outcome in 1999. Hocus-pocus, the spring bear hunt is gone, and we know the results of the 1999 campaign.

The other one that's most interesting that I've taken a great interest in—and by the way, if you ask the Minister of Natural Resources for a cost-benefit analysis about the suspension of the spring bear hunt, none of that material exists. So that was a decision that was made—a political call.

The second one during the same campaign was the sale of the 407. Let me get into that for a moment. The sale of 407 was interesting. The government is facing the electorate in 1999. The Common Sense Revolution said that we're going to be in a balanced budget position. They had an asset that was conservatively valued between \$6 billion and \$7 billion. It was sold to a Spanish consortium for \$3 billion, on a 99-year lease—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Oh, sorry, I thought somebody was—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: No, no. I thought somebody was—if I could continue, thanks, Mr. Speaker.

In fact—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I distinctly saw, as every member in this House and you as well, that the member from Peterborough took his seat. In this House, when a member takes their seat, they have relinquished the floor. It is time to move on to another speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I take the member's comment seriously. I believe the member believed there was a point of order because someone here stood and said some words.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I made my decision.

Mr. John Yakabuski: To that point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew—Nipissing, I made my decision. I would ask you to take your seat.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Peterborough, carry on.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to finish on the 407. A decision was made to sell that very valuable asset off for \$3 billion in order for—that would be a plug number in the 1999 provincial budget, in order that a balanced budget would be perceived. It was a 99-year lease. We all know that there are people sitting in Madrid, Spain, today, in what I call the second Ontario Place, enjoying their pina colodas with the little umbrellas on their drink and getting every month their revenue cheques courtesy of the province of Ontario.

So to say that there have never been political calls during a campaign is just not a fact. That has been an issue that the opposition has been hanging their hats on. I think I clearly demonstrated this morning that, over a long period of time, there have been political calls during election campaigns.

In fact, it's interesting enough; I want to support a decision that was made by the member from Simcoe-Grey when he was the very distinguished Minister of Energy. I have great respect for him, and I supported his position. If you look at the Globe and Mail back on January 16, 2002:

"Energy Minister Jim Wilson is not able to speak freely about Ontario Power Generation, the main company he oversees as the province's electricity czar, because he has signed an unusual gag agreement.

"Under the agreement, he is to keep confidential any information the government-owned company tells him should be kept secret....

"The minister signed the pledge on September 24, 1999, nearly six months after the government created Ontario Power, one of the two main successor companies to Ontario Hydro.

"Mike Krizanc, a spokesman for Mr. Wilson, defended the agreement, saying it protects Ontario Power in a competitive electricity market," and he went on to say that it was the right thing to do. Indeed, it goes on to say that the government refused to divulge "most of its 42 studies and other records on the lease, citing cabinet secrecy and a fear that disclosure would damage the province financially."

Those of us, Mr. Speaker, as you have, who have served in municipal politics know full well, know very well that when things are discussed in caucus, particularly development matters, we're always cautioned that part of the discussion deals with commercially sensitive issues. That is a standard which all governments have applied in the province of Ontario in dealing with issues that could be commercially sensitive in nature. Revealing documents, in fact, may expose the province to legal issues down the road.

I want to talk about a former Speaker this morning, Gary Carr. Gary Carr was a former member of this House and a very, very fine individual who had a reputation next to none when he was Speaker. He did provide a ruling back in the spring of 2003 dealing with the Magna budget, and I just want to quote:

"Before turning to those arguments, I want to explain the meaning of 'contempt,' and the best way for me to do

that is to first explain the meaning of 'privilege.' Parliamentary privilege is defined at page 65 of the 22nd edition of Erskine May. Like Erskine May, standing order 21(a) indicates that there are two overarching categories of privilege. The first category consists of privileges that are enjoyed by the House collectively: the power to discipline—that is, the right to punish persons guilty of breach of privilege or contempts and the power to expel members; the right to regulate its own internal affairs; the authority to maintain the attendance and service of its members; the right to institute inquiries and to call witnesses and demand papers; the right to administer oaths to witnesses; and the right to publish papers containing defamatory materials. The second category consists of privileges that are enjoyed by individual members: freedom of speech; freedom from arrest in civil actions; exemption from jury duty; and exemption from attendance as a witness in the courts."

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He goes on, and he also goes back to a ruling that was made by a former Speaker from Peterborough, the Honourable John Turner, on May 9, 1983, with regard to privilege and contempt. I think it's worthwhile if all members would take the opportunity to read what Speaker Carr issued in 2003 in the spring with regard to the issue of privileges and contempt related to the delivery of the budget that was done at a Magna auto manufacturing plant. It was my understanding that there were gift bags that day, plastic fenders provided by Frank Stronach, as members exited on that famous day. In fact, we should take the time to look at those issues very clearly, the issues of both privileges and contempt, as they were outlined in the ruling by Speaker Carr in the spring of 2003.

I'd like to take a moment now in terms of Mr. Bentley. I have a copy here of the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, and I wanted to give a definition of "attest." The Oxford dictionary says that "attest" means to "confirm to the validity or truth" that evidence or proof has been delivered. "Attestation" is "the act of attesting" to the truth.

It is my view that by signing statements of attestation that were done by the head of the OPA and indeed Minister Bentley, all of the documents that have been requested have certainly been delivered. It seems to me that that is the crux of the problem: all 36,000 pages of documents that have been delivered, and the opportunity for the members of the opposition to go through those documents.

As I said, I want to get back to the issue of when you deal with things in municipal council, when you deal with things in caucus—when there's economic development—the issue of keeping commercially sensitive issues that are not broadly broadcast because of the unintended consequences that may exist if that information was revealed. That has been the standard of cabinets in this Parliament for many, many years.

I said this morning I supported exactly what Minister Wilson did back in 2002. As the energy minister, as related to 1999, he was dealing with some very commer-

cially sensitive information related to Ontario Power, which he said he couldn't divulge. I respect that. He is an honourable man. He made the right decision back in 1999, not unlike the same decision that was made by Minister Bentley. "We'll provide all the documents in detail"—the only ones that were not divulged were ones that may relate to some commercially sensitive issues that could potentially expose the people of Ontario to litigation down the road, something we won't want.

When it comes to energy, it's very interesting. Everybody talks about how our energy system is in a state of chaos in the province of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, I know I can't use props, but I just want to make reference to a *Globe and Mail* article of Wednesday, September 26, 2012. It's an ad that was taken out by our friends in the Power Workers' Union and said, "Ontario's energy advantages can help make Canada a diverse energy superpower."

I ask all members to take the opportunity to read this article. It certainly is, from Don MacKinnon's point of view, the president of the Power Workers' Union, what is going on in the energy sector here in the province of Ontario. It's not the doom and gloom that has been put forward by the members opposite. In fact, it's a very good article, a very detailed article that takes the opportunity to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakubski: You know that the members of this assembly are not allowed to use props. I consider that that is a prop, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, I would ask him to read the article. If he's going to use it, I would ask him to actually read the article to the members of this assembly and let them hear what Don MacKinnon had to say about the energy policy of this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much for your point of order. I don't think it's a point of order. I've seen many members read articles referring to their comments.

The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, the article's available. I don't mind quoting from it. He's talking about our work in the nuclear field, and he says, "In Ontario, new nuclear reactors will create tens of thousands of person years of new employment, billions of dollars in economic spinoffs, and additional environmental benefits." I agree, because the GE Hitachi nuclear division is headquartered in my riding of Peterborough. I've visited them on many occasions and I can certainly echo what Mr. MacKinnon says in this article, as it's quite relevant to what goes on in my riding of Peterborough, so I agree with him.

He talks about two particular areas of our energy sector where he thinks that we can make good advances. Our government policy is that generation from nuclear resources will be about 50% to 52% of our base load capacity going into the future, so that's a given. He, in fact, is supporting what we're doing in one sector of the energy field.

Mr. Speaker, with my last minute and 38 seconds, I just want to spend some time talking about the quality of a man, Chris Bentley, a gentleman who has had an exemplary legal career in London, Ontario. He spent a lot of his time volunteering to set up legal clinics in the London area. He had a great reputation as a labour lawyer, in fact, doing a lot of pro bono legal work for many, many years for the citizens in London, Ontario. Those citizens perhaps didn't get the opportunity to acquire legal services, but Mr. Bentley was there to provide it.

We are today, of course, supporting Mr. Bentley, a man of great integrity. This is not an issue of putting him under the bus. It's not an issue of getting a tow truck to pull the bus from underneath him. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it is here to support an honourable member, an honourable member who has distinguished himself day in and day out in this Legislature. Our side will continue to make sure that the arguments are made on behalf of Mr. Bentley because he deserves that support.

I'm appalled. I'm appalled, Mr. Speaker, at some of the character assassination that's been going on with regard to Mr. Bentley. We'll continue this debate next week. We'll continue debate the week after that, and we can continue the debate all the way to Christmas if we want. But I just want to conclude this morning with a quote from John Kennedy. Mr. Kennedy said, "If more politicians knew poetry, and more poets knew politics, I am convinced the world would be a little better place."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: We're speaking to the motion on the production of documents here to the Standing Committee on Estimates. At the root of this breach of privilege is not just a failure by the minister to heed the warnings of the standing committee of this House, or the ruling by Speaker Levac, to bring forth the requested documentation. No, what's at the real root of this motion of privilege is a government that is lost and that is wandering around in the political hinterlands without purpose or direction; a government that clings to power, no matter what and without purpose; a government that is no longer interested in the public interest, but only in their own self-interest; a government that is not interested in the commonwealth of our citizens, but in their own wealth; a government who no longer seeks power to advance public policy, a public policy agenda or a political ideology, but a government who seeks to advance their own personal entitlements, to enlarge their own perks and to expand their own privileges.

The Dalton McGuinty Liberals are neither the first and I'm sure not the last government to fall into this trap and this downward spiral into that deep, dark well of political power. We have seen this political death wish from all parties in the past. This is not an exclusive Liberal death wish by any means. It often happens to all parties. Unless there is a strong and determined caucus, a caucus with fundamental resolve to serve their constituents; a caucus with a backbone made of principle and a caucus with an indefatigable commitment to purpose over power, and

undaunted courage to realize that ethics must trump entitlements. Sadly, Speaker, this government lacks these traits and characteristics. They may have had them at one time—I'm not sure—but it is obvious they no longer do.

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While I've been intently listening to and watching this debate, this debate on the breach of privilege, I cannot help but conclude what I believe is self-evident: We have a government and a party that is both in disarray and in decline. Their lust for power has become so all-important that decisions are made not for the people but to keep their hands on the levers of power.

The caucus has begun to consume their individual members now, which is what is happening to this current Minister of Energy. He must be sacrificed so that the collective may continue to hold on to their entitlements and their perks. It's as if a political cannibalization has begun.

I'd like to ask the members here: Where is the member from Oakville, and where is the former Minister of Energy, whose fingerprints are all over this crime scene? And where are they in—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would remind the member, who is fully aware, that we're not supposed to mention members who are not in the Legislature.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Pardon me, Speaker. I was not mentioning today, but their defence of the Minister of Energy through this debate.

I can assure all members of the government that you will not feel satisfied or satiated when this deed is complete. Your appetite for power will require the sacrifice of others. It might be your seatmate beside you, behind you, and maybe yourself. You will find no redemption in defending the indefensible. It can only be found by seeking out and defending your constituents, their interests and their commonwealth.

I watched earnestly as the dean of the Legislature spoke—the Minister of the Environment and the member for St. Catharines. He had a powerful message in his delivery. I'm sure that there were others who read between the lines of the minister's debate and his comments as he spoke of past ministers, ministers of all parties, ministers of the crown who had recognized they had erred and had offered their resignations. The minister spoke of how members from opposite sides of the House spoke highly of those fallen ministers and strongly encouraged the Premier of the day not to accept those resignations. But those ministers remained true and stoic and left their ministerial posts. They kept their integrity, they kept their credibility and they kept their honour.

The Minister of the Environment's message to all of us and to his cabinet colleagues, the energy minister, and I think, also the health minister was that they ought to have offered their resignations. Had this been done, or if the minister had complied with his duty and obligation to this House, we would not be here today with the Minister of Energy facing the possibility of being held in contempt and being censured.

Thomas Jefferson summed this all up in a short phrase, "Nobody can acquire honour by doing what is wrong"—a powerful, short statement that sums it all up, that quote from Thomas Jefferson. It's time that they stopped doing what is wrong.

The minister may still have a window to regain some stature and re-establish some semblance of honour and integrity, but he'd best not wait till he gets to the top of the 39th step. He must find the courage to honour this House before he takes more steps.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Can I assume the member from Parkdale–High Park has a point of order? I need to know.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to make sure the House is aware that we've got Phil Demers, Brendan Kelly, Brett Whitty, Glen Owen and Angela Bontivegna, who are all former Marineland trainers and employees; Rob Laidlaw, from Zoocheck; and Lauryn Drainie, a campaigner for Change.org here. They're all concerned about the animals left to suffer at Marineland, and they wish to deliver the signatures of 80,000 people who feel the same way to the Premier. So I would ask for a page to come over.

Miss Monique Taylor: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make a quick acknowledgement to all the folks who are here today—because the reading of my bill was supposed to happen today, Bill 110. There will be a rally on the front lawn today. I welcome them all to Queen's Park and all MPPs to join the rally at 1 o'clock at the front.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry—and I remembered.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Point of order, Speaker: I'd like to introduce two members from my riding: Ronald Grant and his wife. Ronald is a cancer survivor. He spoke this morning at the prostate cancer breakfast. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I've stated in the past, these are not points of order, but we definitely welcome all of our guests, and I thank you for your patience.

It is now time for further debate. The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I left off earlier this morning, commenting and reflecting on the Minister of the Environment's comments on this debate on the privilege motion. Now, I want to contrast those profound statements of our most senior colleague here in this House with those of other members of his caucus.

We have seen often some cavalier chatter by many. We've seen those members of the government benches who are despondent and clearly with heavy hearts on this matter, but we've also seen and heard those lame excuses by members from Guelph, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Mississauga–Streetsville and others.

But we've also heard from the Attorney General, who represents Kingston and the Islands, as he gave a historical perspective of this House and spoke highly of past Premiers, especially Premiers Robarts and Davis. The Attorney General presupposed that those Premiers would not have engaged in this activity, and they would not have been involved in a breach-of-privilege motion.

Speaker, I too hold many past Premiers in high regard. The Liberal Oliver Mowat is one of those. His legendary battles to protect the constitutional jurisdiction of the provinces are legendary. But would he have allowed his ministers to willfully dismiss a lawful request from the assembly or its committee? I think not. Laurier is another historical Liberal that I am very fond of, and he stands out larger than life as a statesman. His hallmark, "Freedom for all, privilege for none," seems to be long lost and forgotten by this McGuinty Liberal government, which much prefers "Freedom for none and privilege for us few" as their hallmark. Laurier or Mowat would never have allowed their campaign teams to supplant the administration of government. They would not have tolerated disrespect for our Parliament.

Yesterday afternoon, I found myself fascinated with the member for Mississauga South, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and his endearing endorsement of the virtues of democracy. I listened intently as he elucidated to this House his and his party's listening to the people and how it was this government who had found the strength to make the necessary hard choices with the cancellation of the Oakville plant.

But those were not tears of quietly shared sentiments that choked at my heart. They were tears for all those communities who have been calling out loudly and in great numbers against an industrial wind turbine or solar project in their communities, who found their voices quashed under the heavy fist of this government's Green Energy Act that stripped them of their democratic rights because their community was not so deserving of the member from Mississauga South's admiration for democracy.

Tell the people of Amherst Island that the people have a voice in McGuinty's democracy and they will very readily prove to you otherwise. Ask the people of Huron–Bruce, Chatham–Kent–Essex, Prince Edward–Hastings or Durham, just to name a few. Ask them where their democracy is, and the answer is clear: There's no Liberal seat to be saved or won there, so their voices do not matter.

The member from Mississauga South would like us to believe he and his party have affection for democracy. But it's all a charade to them, a shell game for power, thinly veiled with redacted contracts, blanked-out emails and secret friends. Now we have the government's

Minister of Energy called upon the altar of sacrifice by his party for withholding documents, which everyone in this House knows only proves the self-evident: that this government has been caught in their lust for power, having democracy for some when it serves them, but securing it for none when it doesn't.

But it was the government House leader's comments that provided real clarity to the failings of this government. As the government House leader spoke in glowing terms of this august institution and the honour and integrity of its members, the feint and the pretext of his disregard became apparent in his subsequent sentence as he referred to us all as a court of marsupials and was quickly admonished by the Speaker. Is it any wonder that the House leaders could not agree when the government House leader refers to honourable members of this House as kangaroos?

Mr. Speaker, a breach of privilege—and this is a breach of privilege—is a most egregious abuse and demonstration of disrespect. The continued failure of the Liberals to have regard for this assembly will invariably lead to a contempt or censure motion. I ask them to do the right thing, not for us here in the opposition benches but for themselves, and, more importantly, for the people of Ontario and for this institution that is built to protect our freedoms and to guard against injustice.

Mr. Speaker, this Oakville plant is being relocated to my riding. It's being relocated to the existing Lennox generating station. The Lennox generating station is a 2,100-megawatt gas-fired power plant. Last year, it operated at less than 1% capacity. Last year, it operated for a couple of days, mostly in a maintenance role and to provide power for its own systems. It's 2,100 megawatts. It's more than double the proposed new billion-dollar plant to be built beside us. I ask the Speaker and I ask this House if indeed this is a good and proper place for this new gas-fired power plant, beside the existing one. If this is good and proper, then why wasn't it done originally?

1040

Even more importantly, if indeed we can generate power there cost-effectively and deliver it to Oakville, where it is needed, why didn't they just turn the switch on at Lennox and ramp up from their 1% operations to 50%? That's all.

We have heard from this Liberal government that there is no other need, no costs other than the \$40 million in unrecoverables for their breach of the contract with TransCanada. Something doesn't smell right here, Speaker. If indeed that is truthful, they would have been total incompetents not to put that plant there in the first place, or to turn the switch on at the seldom-used Lennox station. We are going into billions of dollars of new expenses and costs for our taxpayers, and for what? For what? A 2,100-megawatt gas-fired plant that sits idle in eastern Ontario, and a brand new billion-dollar-plus plant being built on the same property. I don't know what OPG has sold the property for, but I think it's probably somewhat less than the billion dollars that it's going to cost us to build this plant.

There are more important details to come. This standing committee of the House, the Standing Committee on Finance, must be aware of what is going on behind the cloaks and behind the scenes of this power plant fiasco. We cannot, in all good conscience, make decisions and hold each other to account when there are such blatant, blatant contradictions and hypocrisies that are being put forth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You do have to withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw—such blatant contradictions between what is said and what is known to be truthful.

It surprised me, Speaker. I am quite surprised, and I'll share this. I spoke with the Attorney General during this debate because, as the Attorney General said in his comments, he can see the smokestacks of the Lennox generating station from his house. Lennox is in his backyard. It has been in his backyard since the 1970s. The Attorney General said to me, "Well, that's an oil plant, an oil-fired generating station." I said, "No, Attorney General. It is indeed a gas-fired plant." Clearly, even he was very puzzled that they're building a new gas-fired plant right next door on the same property as an idled gas-fired generating plant which is more than twice the size of the new one.

And I would ask this House and ask the members to take a look at the information provided by OPG on their production levels out of Lennox. It's on the public record: less than 1%. So 2,000 megawatts of capacity sits there doing nothing as we save the seats for Kevin Flynn, the member from Oakville, and a few others.

This has got to stop, Speaker. The Standing Committee on Estimates must get to the bottom of this.

Again, I'll say, you can acquire no honour by doing the wrong thing. Acquire some honour.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you—

Hon. Charles Sousa: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order for the minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, to the members of the Legislative Assembly, I'd like for us to take a moment to honour the parents of page Jasper Hébert from Mississauga South. We have Eva Bak-Hébert and Brad Hébert here with us. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have indicated that I've been trying to be lenient, as all members have been pretty reasonable, but we would like to make sure that if these introductions are going to take place, they take place at the beginning or at the end. This is a matter on which I want to stay focused and fluid, please.

Further debate? The Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I won't begin by saying it's a pleasure to be speaking on this motion—I guess we're speaking on the sub-amendment to the amendment to the motion—but I do feel it's an honour to have an opportunity to stand up and speak about the situation that we've seen developing here in the Legislature over the

last number of days, if not the last number of weeks. I hope to use my time, as much as possible, to put some facts on the table that perhaps have gotten lost with some of the discussions that have gone on previously.

Like many members in the Legislature, I have listened to the remarks and the speeches made by my colleagues from all sides of the House, and again I think it's important that we make sure that everyone understands the situation as it truly should be put forward. It's important for the people who are attending in the gallery today, important for those people who are visiting the Legislature and watching on TV and others.

I am certainly very, very proud of the relationship that I have with my colleague the Minister of Energy, Mr. Bentley. I think we all know him well and respect him well. He is a man of the highest integrity, and I think he handled the situation in a fashion that truly showed respect for the parliamentary process, in light of the challenges that were being faced and the questions that he was being asked under those particular circumstances. As a gentleman who was elected in 2003 and served in a number of ministry positions prior to his position of Minister of Energy—I know that I've had a great opportunity to work with him in some of those portfolios very, very closely, and I can only say that it has been an honour to work with him. I know how much the role of an MPP and the role of minister means to him.

I do think that perhaps the most important thing we can do is to, again, remind everyone of the exact circumstances that transpired. Let me try to run through those for everyone who is listening today. We do know that since this particular debate started on the motion and, prior to that, over the last number of weeks, the official opposition and the third party have attempted to create, I think, what is a myth, and that myth is that the Minister of Energy has willfully attempted to hide or conceal these documents from the Legislature. Quite frankly, I think nothing could be further from the truth, and that's why I think it's important for us to work our way through the process.

On May 9, Minister Bentley appeared before the estimates committee. Between May 9 and July 11, he was there on a number of occasions. He appeared before the committee, and of course the purpose of appearing for estimates—others of us in cabinet have had that opportunity to appear before estimates as well. This was regarding the 2012-13 estimates of the Ministry of Energy. While the minister was answering questions related to a number of issues—certainly there's no question, particularly if one looks at the Hansard—committee members from the official opposition spent considerable time asking the minister questions specifically related to the two gas plants which were to have been built in Oakville and Mississauga respectively. I don't think there is any argument that while he was before the committee, the minister was certainly being placed in a very, very difficult position. He was repeatedly asked to answer questions related to those two facilities. The overwhelming majority of the questions related to the outstanding

legal proceedings and the confidential negotiations that were under way.

1050

From my perspective, Mr. Speaker, and I think from the perspective of many of us in the Legislature, the Minister of Energy attempted, as best he could, to strike an effective balance between respecting the estimates committee's authority to ask those questions—which included them requesting those documents—and the minister's obligation and his need to protect the public interest in the midst of what were highly sensitive commercial negotiations and litigation. There's no doubt that the minister had a responsibility as a minister of the crown, and those responsibilities are different than the responsibilities that we have as members of the provincial Legislature.

Again, it's important to point out that the Chair of the committee, the member for Beaches–East York, certainly recognized, as Chair, the rather delicate, if not precarious, situation the Minister of Energy was in. In fact, the Chair, the member for Beaches–East York, repeatedly ruled that while the committee members were permitted to ask such questions, the minister was able to exercise his discretion and respond to such questions in a manner that would protect or could protect the interests of the province.

Let me just quote the Chair's remarks. Mr. Prue said, "The minister has the right to decline either giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during his answering of the questions." That was one segment that I saw from Hansard, Mr. Speaker.

Another section that's important for I think all members to be reminded of is that the Chair said on the same day, May 16, "I would advise that I'm going to allow the motion to proceed, but I would also advise—and I think the minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and I would expect him to do so. That would be my ruling."

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the minister relied on the Chair's repeated statements and rulings that the minister was permitted to respond to questions and document requests from committee members in a manner that did protect the interests of the province.

Following that, the minister wrote to the committee on May 30 and advised the committee that he was exercising his discretion and would not be able to produce the requested documentation as they were confidential, subject to solicitor-client privilege, litigation privilege or highly commercially sensitive.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the opposition chose to ignore the flags that were raised by the minister. They certainly chose to show no restraint. That isn't something we've seen in the past, and it was unfortunate. We know, of course, that on June 5 the member for Cambridge moved a motion to report to the House the minister's failure to produce all the records, pursuant to the motion of May 16, and that of course began this process related to the contempt proceedings.

What I think is so disturbing to many of us and, obviously, particularly those of us on this side of the House, is that the official opposition and the third party, in their attempt, quite frankly, to vilify the Minister of Energy, a man of extraordinary integrity, and I think also, may I say, to score political points, will try to tell you and the public that the minister hid or concealed these records. Clearly, that is simply not true. We need to deal with the facts. I think that's incredibly important. The record absolutely shows that the Minister of Energy at all times was trying to balance—one of the great challenges that many of us have—two important yet competing public interests: the supremacy of Parliament versus the protection of taxpayer interests. As the process unfolded over the summer, I think there was further proof of the minister doing just exactly that.

On July 10, the minister announced that the Ontario Power Authority had reached an agreement with Greenfield to relocate the Mississauga facility and that the government had accepted the OPA's recommendation to relocate it to the Lambton station in Sarnia. In addition, the minister announced a few other aspects related to some other civil proceedings.

With the legal matters pertaining to the Mississauga gas plant having been settled, the minister then directed his ministry to provide the committee with all correspondence related to the Mississauga facility that was responsive to the motion of May 16, except for the records that were subject to solicitor-client privilege. Those documents were indeed provided to the committee.

Certainly, if the minister was in any way trying to conceal those documents, you have to ask the question: Why would he have released them the moment he had a settlement with respect to the Mississauga gas plant? Again, I think it's important that we continue to deal with the facts of the matter.

Speaker, if I may, I'll move on to the ruling that you made on September 13, which related also to the negotiations with TransCanada regarding the Oakville plant. They were still ongoing. As they were still ongoing, the minister was not in a position to produce the documents prior to the Speaker's ruling. On September 13, Speaker, you ruled that while a prima facie breach of privilege had been established, you would set aside the matter. You asked the three House leaders to take it upon themselves to find a path that would satisfy the request of the estimates committee.

Generally speaking, I know the member could have moved his motion forward, but in this matter, with your ruling, you exercised your discretion to follow the approach—and I think it was an approach adopted by Speaker Milliken in the Afghan detainee matter—of setting aside your ruling to allow the House leaders to get together to devise a means where both concerns were met—certainly challenging, but one, indeed, where we'd like to think it could happen.

I think, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker—and I trust you will agree with what I'm saying—that what you were doing was recognizing that there were two competing

public interests at play: the interests of the committee in exercising its parliamentary privilege, unquestionably, and the interests of the government and the Minister of Energy, in temporarily refraining from the disclosure of sensitive information in the midst of commercial negotiations and related proceedings. Certainly, that gave an opportunity for all three parties, the House leaders, to talk very frankly about how we could get to come to that ruling.

Again, Speaker, you laid out that this was a pretty unique situation. It was a unique situation, unlike various other cases of privilege, and in that case, it did warrant a unique solution.

The House leaders did meet on I think four separate occasions, actually, to determine whether a solution could be found. We certainly had high hopes that the parties would ultimately reach a solution that struck a balance between the competing public interests identified in the Speaker's ruling. We tabled two separate proposals and we asked for a number of meetings. A couple of times the leaders chose not to continue to meet to discuss it. Certainly, we heard many things publicly as well.

1100

This past Monday—you made it clear you needed a resolution by, I believe, the end of the day on Monday, September 24—the minister was able to announce the completion of the negotiations, the settlement of the Oakville matter. When that was announced, the minister complied. The government complied, the minister complied, and released all 36,000 pages of the records that were responsive to the original motion of the estimates committee.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that the request of the committee has been standing here, so one has to ask the question: Why are we here today having this debate? I think it's not inappropriate to say that there is a political agenda at work here. There's no other way to put it other than the fact that the opposition, particularly the Conservatives, has made a decision to stop the regular business of the Ontario Legislature, bringing it to a halt. We saw it in the spring, when they were ringing bells all spring long, and now we have this process under way.

A couple of days ago, we completed debate on a very important piece of legislation, the home renovation tax credit, something that we completed third reading debate on, I believe, Monday. We could have and we should have had a vote on this, Mr. Speaker, but we are not able to do so. Here is a piece of legislation that will help improve Ontarians' lives and certainly help our seniors in a specific way, and that is being held up.

We've seen the Legislature being hijacked by this, ultimately to debate the nuance of documents that I don't think all the members have even tried to tell us they've actually read in full.

Again, I think it's just so important to remember actually what has happened here. We have a minister of the crown, Minister Bentley, again, a man of extraordinary integrity, somebody I think really, truly—if you ask each of the members individually, they would tell

you they admire and respect very much and appreciate working with him incredibly closely. It's just so true. I believe that every member across the floor would say the same thing. But we have them moving forward on a motion when the minister actually has complied with the request.

The official opposition asked for the documents. We certainly made the case that releasing those documents at that time would compromise our ability to negotiate with the company. We concluded those negotiations; 36,000 pages of documents were then provided to the opposition. We complied with their request. We followed through, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Energy followed through.

Now we have—I want to be careful with the words that I use, Mr. Speaker, because you will upbraid me if I don't—a startling process. The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington was referencing remarks made by the Minister of the Environment, Minister Bradley, earlier this week. I think he misunderstood them, misinterpreted them.

Minister Bradley, with the benefit of the long history he has had in the Legislature, was truly trying to alert us to the dangerous process that we were going down with this particular motion. He also was able to give examples—again, with that extraordinary benefit of history—of how parties have worked their way through these kinds of challenges and how members from different sides of the House have responded differently.

Nobody argues at all with the fact that, as elected officials, we must always balance the supremacy of Parliament with the public interest. There are circumstances—and I think they've been well established and I think Minister Bentley established them very well. We were in a very difficult position in terms of sensitive negotiations, but there was always a recognition that indeed it was our goal to release those documents.

What are we seeing? We're seeing the opposition throwing mud against the wall to see, quite frankly, if anything sticks. This is about partisan politics. This is not about a minister of the crown not responding to the will of the Legislature. Indeed, when he was able to do so, he has, and quite frankly it's discouraging to see this kind of process under way, particularly when we're seeing the work of the Legislature truly ground to a halt. There are a number of issues, I think we would all agree—I just heard one of the members across the floor from Hamilton Mountain talking about a private member's bill that she was hoping to bring forward today, and I don't know what will happen this afternoon.

The fact is that we are very committed to the supremacy of Parliament. We are certainly very supportive of Minister Bentley. I will acknowledge that Minister Bentley is a dear personal friend of mine, but he's also somebody I've learned a great deal from. He has served the province of Ontario in an extraordinarily positive way. This is not a process that should be carrying on in our Legislature anymore.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, we participate in this debate cognizant of the fact that when it concludes with

the vote that must ensue, in the final analysis, we are sitting in judgment of our colleague, the Minister of Energy. The actual wording of the motion that we are debating stands in the name of the member for Cambridge, because it was his point of privilege—acknowledged by you, Mr. Speaker—that we are technically debating. The motion reads as follows:

“That this House directs the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to table immediately with the Clerk of the House all remaining documents ordered by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012; and

“That the matter of the Speaker's finding of a prima facie case of privilege, with respect to the production of documents by the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to the Standing Committee on Estimates, be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which is hereby re-constituted as it existed on September 9, 2012; and

“That the committee shall be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair, and shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012.”

An amendment to that motion has already been moved, and it reads as follows:

“That the words ‘November 19th, 2012’ be deleted and the following added ‘November 23rd, 2012.’”

A motion to amend that amendment has also been moved, and it reads as follows:

“That, the words ‘November 23rd, 2012’ be removed and the following be added, ‘November 26th, 2012.’”

You'd have to be an expert on Robert's Rules of Order to understand all that, Mr. Speaker, but thank goodness we have the professional expertise of the table staff to help us make sense of it all—and you, Mr. Speaker, your interpretation, which we highly value.

As we know, this debate has larger implications. I did not seek the opportunity to speak to this motion. I was asked to do so. My reticence was, in a sense, understandable. I know the Minister of Energy, not as well as I know some honourable members, but as well as I know many of the members across the aisle. I always say in my riding and I will say here today, Mr. Speaker, there are good people in all three parties in this House, and while we may differ in philosophy and in policy, we can agree on the ends we would hope to achieve for the province that we are all privileged to serve.

I must acknowledge that I like the minister, Chris Bentley. I have nothing against him personally, and of course, we are all honourable members in the parliamentary tradition and, more precisely, in the tradition of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Listening to his colleagues on the government side come to his defence during the course of this debate, there is no question that he is well liked and held in high regard by his colleagues in his own party, who know him best, and his constituents in London West, who know him best of all. They've sent him here in 2003, 2007 and 2011 in the 38th, 39th and 40th provincial Parliaments.

I must say that I do not profess to have the wisdom to be absolutely certain of what the House should decide on

the question before it. When I began writing these remarks last night—believe it or not, on my BlackBerry—I tried to begin with a blank canvas and tried to do so without prejudice. I reviewed again the material and the documents relating to this matter that I'd taken back to my apartment and I began to write. By 11 p.m. last night, I was finished and I'd drawn my conclusion.

On the face of it, Mr. Speaker, as you had ruled, in the Latin, *prima facie*, the minister has breached—or in other words has flouted and disregarded—the privileges of members of provincial Parliament because he refused to release documents to the Standing Committee on Estimates when the committee had duly requested that he do so.

Parliament is supreme. The government of the day is not, and no one, not even the Premier or one of his ministers, can thumb their nose at a parliamentary committee. The government strategists apparently didn't know this at the time of the Speaker's ruling, but they understand it now. Perhaps if they had studied parliamentary tradition to the same extent as they've obviously memorized Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, this debate would not be taking place today.

1110

We know well the government's reasons for its refusal to release the documents. Negotiations were ongoing, we were told, with the private company that the province had contracted to build the gas-fired electricity generation plant before they cancelled it. "In light of the confidential, privileged and highly commercially sensitive nature of these issues, it would not be appropriate for my office or the ministry to disclose information that would prejudice these ongoing negotiations and litigation," the Minister of Energy wrote to the committee. Over and over and over again, month after month after month, this was the excuse.

Of course, the people of Ontario have been disappointed and angered to learn of the politically motivated decisions to cancel gas plants in Oakville in 2010 and, even more cynically, if that's possible, in Mississauga in the midst of the provincial election one year ago. They'd like us to believe, I'm sure, that it's sheer coincidence that they were able to come to a mutually satisfactory agreement with TransCanada—after months and months of negotiations that they initially intended to carry on past the by-elections and possibly even after the general election, whenever it comes—to move the gas plant to the Kingston area, nail down the agreement last weekend and announce it this Monday. They would want us to believe that it will cost taxpayers and/or hydro ratepayers only \$40 million, assuming that people won't think that's a big deal.

They expect us to believe all that? Contempt for Parliament? Where I come from, it's more like contempt for the people of Ontario.

Let's go back for a moment to the events of the past summer. Hoping that no one was paying attention, hoping that no one was reading the newspaper, hoping that no one was watching the newscasts, hoping that no

one was following social media, the government decided in July to disclose the cost of the cancellation of the Mississauga gas plant and its relocation to Lambton. We were told by the Minister of Energy that this decision—again, the one announced during the provincial election, intended to save four Liberal seats in the Mississauga area—would cost \$180 million. He sounded like C.D. Howe, the federal Liberal cabinet minister of the post-war years, who famously dismissed his responsibility as the steward of taxpayers' money when he said, "What's a million?" That statement, more than any other, heralded the defeat of the Liberal government of Louis St. Laurent in the 1950s. His indifference that day in July in the estimates committee sounded like contempt not only for parliament, but for taxpayers and/or hydro ratepayers.

I was at the estimates committee that day along with the members for Cambridge, Kitchener-Conestoga and Chatham-Kent-Essex. We all asked pointed questions to the Minister of Energy. To say that he was uncomfortable would be like saying Ontario needs affordable electricity for its economic development—an understatement in the extreme. The next day, it must have been very humiliating for the Minister of Energy when his colleague and erstwhile leadership rival the Minister of Finance publicly corrected him, saying that the actual cost of relocating the Mississauga plant was \$190 million, not \$180 million, as the minister had said the day before.

What's a million? Indeed, what's \$10 million to a Liberal when you can blame it on some 60 years of inflation? In my riding in 2012, \$1 million is still a lot of money. We in Wellington-Halton Hills know that \$190 million, the cost of cancelling the Mississauga plant, is a ton of money, money that could have been used to begin to pay down the provincial debt, cut taxes to stimulate the economy, encourage job creation or invest in infrastructure projects that strengthen our long-term economic competitiveness, and protect our environment. Alternatively, \$190 million would easily build and largely equip a brand-new 60-bed hospital in Wellington-Halton Hills, or it could pay the salaries and overhead for about 380 new doctors for a year. Also, \$190 million could pay the costs associated with hiring approximately 1,900 new police officers for a year.

Let's remember another fact that the government chooses to omit from the present debate: Their rush to build natural gas-fired electricity generation plants is a direct consequence of their flawed and mistaken Green Energy Act and the feed-in tariff and microFIT programs that have followed, paying up to 80 cents a kilowatt hour for power that they in turn sell to the market for five cents a kilowatt hour or less. Approving wind farms in rural Ontario, ignoring the wishes of local residents, dismissing the legitimate health concerns, giving short shrift to the Health Canada study that was announced in July—what if the wind isn't blowing or the sun isn't shining and the power is still needed? Of course, you need back-up that you can fire up real fast, thus the need for new natural gas-fired electricity generating capacity.

Let's talk about the need for electricity at the moment. When the government initially made plans to site gas

plants in Oakville and Mississauga, they correctly pointed out that it made sense to build the plants close to where the demand for electricity was growing, for a long list of good economic reasons. The cost of transmitting electricity over great distances is very high and contributes to upward pressure on our hydro prices, upward pressure on the hydro bill. You need the lines and towers in place, and those lines and towers need to have the capacity to transmit the electricity to where it's needed. If you don't have the lines and towers, you need to build them, again, at great cost. There's also the reality of loss of voltage when electricity is transmitted, which the industry refers to as "line loss." Another big factor in siting gas-fired electricity generating plants is, of course, the availability of the quantity of natural gas that you'll need. Again, if the gas isn't available, new gas mains have to be built to bring the gas to the plant. You can't build a gas plant where there isn't gas to fire it up.

How does it make economic sense to relocate the plants to Lambton and Lennox? Where are the electricity demand studies that show that this makes any sense whatsoever? We've heard in this debate—and the government has not yet uttered a single word to refute it—that the existing Lennox station, an oil- and gas-fired electricity generating station, is almost never fired up. That means the power it can generate is rarely needed in that part of the province, and yet this week they announced they'll build a new gas-fired plant alongside it as part of the settlement with TransCanada. So we build a new plant beside the one that we hardly ever use. It's like having a barbecue on your backyard deck that you almost never use, and in spite of that, going out and buying a second brand new barbecue to put beside it, knowing you'll never use it. But it will sit there and rust, and as the years pass, eventually it will go in the garbage. That's essentially what they're doing.

Let's return now to the documents that the government released this past week. My colleague the member for Nipissing has shown me a couple of them that he made reference to earlier this week in the context of his remarks, and we see of course that there is a lot of blank—a lot of whiteout has been used. Of course, many of these documents are internal communications going back and forth in communications departments. They're not legal documents, Mr. Speaker. They have nothing to do with the legal aspects of this issue; they have everything to do with the spin that the government would hope to put on the issue and how they're going to manage the communications. That's why they've whitened so much of it out.

We have seen boxes and boxes of paper and, for the media, the USB clip. Our staff has spent many hours, and into the evenings, going through these documents, and this is what we see: page upon page that has been whitened out. But what the government would have described as a sincere effort to respond to the Speaker's ruling is blown away by the whiteout on so many of the documents, and all of that whiteout in a futile effort to whitewash the role of the Liberal campaign team—Greg Sorbara, Don Guy

and the others—in the decision to cancel the Mississauga plant, and likely the Premier, other Liberal Ministers of Energy perhaps and Liberal MPPs.

The truth will come out at committee in due course, as it must if anything good is to come out of this mess. It is indeed a tragedy that the Minister of Energy, a good man, is forced to take the fall for all this. If William Shakespeare were here today, he'd wonder if anyone in the government had read his works, if anyone in the government understood the themes of his tragedies, or had even spent a moment thinking of the meaning of what he had written. Themes like pride and vanity evolving—even degenerating—into arrogance, the pursuit of power at all costs, the willingness to sacrifice all principles in the name of keeping power and, subsequently, the inevitable fall.

That, in the final analysis, Mr. Speaker, is why this matter must be reviewed and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, to get the answers that Ontarians deserve, and that's why this House must support this motion.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to rise and speak about my honourable colleague and friend the Minister of Energy.

The Minister of Energy, as I know him, is a person of great integrity and professionalism. He has had an illustrious career as a lawyer, an MPP and a minister of the crown, and certainly his career as the Attorney General was impeccable.

I know that today we are here because of this motion. I do not want to repeat many of the facts which I have heard in here already, but I know that the question of privilege concerning the request for documents of the government and the delay in producing the documents requested has led to this most unfortunate motion. Proceedings in this House have come to a grinding halt. It is something that I feel is important for me to speak on as a friend and colleague of the Minister of Energy.

Mr. Speaker, I reference the Speaker's ruling that a *prima facie* case of privilege has been established and the motion that is before the House. According to Joseph Maingot in *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, and as was referenced by the Speaker, "It is the House alone that decides whether a breach of privilege or a contempt has occurred, for only the House has the power to commit or punish for contempt."

Mr. Speaker, I will vote against the motion, and I urge all members of this House to do so. Why? Because it is the right thing to do. In this case, the documents requested have been delivered. Was there a delay? Yes. Was there an occasion for this delay?

The Minister of Energy is a thoughtful person. As a minister of the crown, he was handling a request for highly sensitive information. He is someone who understands that the unfettered release of information which will be prejudicial to negotiations into the continuation of the plants would be an issue, and, prudent person that he is, he knew that he had to proceed with caution.

Mr. Speaker, in your own ruling on the point of privilege, you stated that the “House and its committees often accommodate or respect security, legal and public policy considerations; they often accept reasonable excuses for non-production.”

Let us not forget: We are speaking about the very plant that the parties opposite insisted that we move. Did they know that there would be costs associated with their request? Of course they knew; we all knew. We knew there would be costs associated with the cancellation and relocation of the plants, and that did not deter them. They wanted it done at all costs. And of course they knew that the costs would be significant.

This certainly was not a decision to be taken lightly or hastily, and so we have to say that—and I refer to the committee Chair’s acknowledgement of the competing public interest, and of course these interests weighed heavily on the mind of the minister and the minister’s decision, and his decision was to proceed cautiously.

Mr. Speaker, again I refer back to your ruling. You said, “The Standing Committee on Estimates was unquestionably entitled to request the documents sought from the Minister of Energy....”

“I am therefore satisfied that a *prima facie* case of privilege has been established.”

Mr. Speaker, you yourself quoted from Speaker Milliken’s April 27, 2010, Afghan detainee ruling: “It seems to me, that the issue before us is this: Is it possible to put into place a mechanism by which these documents could be made available to the House without compromising the security and confidentiality of the information they contain? In other words, is it possible for the two sides, working together in the best interest of the Canadians they serve, to devise a means where both their concerns are met? Surely that is not too much to hope for.” And I repeat: “Surely that is not too much to hope for.”

Mr. Speaker, it is that hope on which I speak today, the hope that we can come to a conclusion that is going to, at the end of the day, work for this House and for all parties involved, and that is not going to tarnish the reputation of a person of this Legislature who is a person of utmost integrity and professionalism.

Again, let us be clear: The documents have been produced. The government House leader has stated in this honourable House that every single document requested was released. But it appears that the main opposition—and I heard someone speak about Shakespeare just a moment ago. It appears that over there, on the other side of this House, the main opposition, akin to Shylock in William Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, is insistent on their pound of flesh.

I would urge the members of the opposition to put a stop to this motion. In appealing to the good in you, I urge you to look inside of yourselves—and yes, I’m asking you to dig deep down in your hearts and ask yourselves, “Is this about justice?” Ask yourselves if this is what we’re here to do. Ask yourselves, “Can I go home to sleep at night knowing that I have taken part in destroying the reputation, the character”—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Excuse me.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

To the last minute, we had respect on both sides for each person speaking. Let’s keep it that way.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will tell the member from Durham, who has been spoken to several times about his interjections, when I’m standing, to stop.

Carry on.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is not my intention to insult anyone; it is my intention to put my piece on the record about what I feel about this minister.

Ask yourselves, “Is this what we came here to do?” Ask yourselves, “How do I feel in taking part in destroying the reputation, the character and the integrity of the Minister of Energy, all in the name of getting a political advantage?” I don’t think any of you can answer “yes” to those questions. I don’t think any of the members opposite can have any peace if you allow this motion to proceed.

I tell you, I haven’t been sleeping lately, and I can assure you that I usually sleep like a baby. But why can’t I sleep? Because these last few days have been the darkest days for me in this Legislature, seeing a motion that is so frivolous and vexatious before this Legislature and, more particularly, against one of the finest members of this Legislature.

I heard one member opposite, over there mention the Latin phrase “*audi alteram partem*,” the words written over the doors of this great chamber. That phrase was my favourite Latin phrase in law school, and when I walked into this chamber and I looked over those doors and saw that, I felt good to be here. I felt proud to be here. It had true meaning for me. But today, I feel deeply saddened, because I believe in justice, and I believe justice should be the fundamental tenet upon which decisions in this House are made. I must say to you that while the words “*audi alteram partem*” denote the right to be heard, implicit in that phrase is the right to be treated fairly and justly upon being heard.

Ask yourselves, “Is this fair and just treatment of the Minister of Energy?” And let me point out to you that the answer to that question does not only affect him; it will affect his family and his children; it will affect his legacy. Think about your families and how hard you have worked to build your reputations to leave a legacy for your children, just to have it taken away by partisan policy. I say it’s bad, very bad—not good.

The Minister of Energy should not have his reputation, his character and his integrity impugned because he dared to act responsibly, given the position he was placed in, in waiting for the ruling of this esteemed Speaker of the Legislature and in acting within the time period prescribed by the Speaker.

The important business of this honourable House has been disrupted long enough by this unfortunate debate,

not to mention the continuous ringing of the bells to stop the people's business earlier this year. The work of the people of Ontario has to go on. They send us here to do it. We should not cast it aside due to the pursuit of partisan politics. Important business of this esteemed Legislature is at a standstill.

I was looking forward today to the debate of my proposed Wireless Services Agreements Act this afternoon, but, no, this House is today tied up with this frivolous and vexatious motion. What has occurred is unfortunate, and it is not reflective of true—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll just take a moment. Thank you.

It being 11:30, this House is recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1131 to 1300.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: As I rise again today, Mr. Speaker, I think it is apropos in the matter at hand to refer to a quote from the late Viscount Hewart, a former Liberal member of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom, a member of the Privy Council and former Attorney General, like my friend and colleague was. He said, and I quote, "Not only must justice be done; it must also be seen to be done."

That is why I rise in this House to speak against this frivolous and vexatious motion. I have stood up for justice all my life. Knowing the Minister of Energy and the relationship I have had with him since I was elected in 2007, the character, integrity and plain decency of this person, if I did not stand up when I see a miscarriage of justice in the making right here in this Legislature, I would be remiss and irresponsible.

When I was first elected to this esteemed Legislature, Mr. Speaker—and I speak personally now—I was new to politics, a neophyte whose only claim to power was having been elected by the people of Scarborough-Guildwood. There was much transitioning to do, and as I tried to find my way, there was one person in this Legislature who stood out in my mind. It was the then Attorney General, now Minister of Energy. He sat to my left, in this very seat where I now sit, and he always had an encouraging word for me. When I went to cabinet and I was nervous about a presentation that I had to make, he would come over to my chair and talk to me about my presentation before, and he would give me some encouraging words at the end of cabinet. He would come over and he would put his hand on my shoulder and say, "You did good," even when I didn't do so good. There was one time when I presented and someone asked me a very difficult technical question, and before it came back to me, he addressed the question. It was as if he knew that I may have some difficulty with the question and he wanted to pre-empt it—a selfless and empowering act of kindness, I would say.

I would dare to say, Mr. Speaker, much like how Daniel Kahneman speaks of his friend and collaborator in

his Nobel Prize winning book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*—and I paraphrase—I found in the collaboration that the minister "frequently saw the point of my sometimes-vague ideas more than I did," and he provided "an unfailing sense of direction."

Those are but a few examples of the minister's selfless and empowering acts of kindness. That is why I stand here and make these statements today, Mr. Speaker, among so many other things that I said before.

While some may look at me just as a neophyte, a black woman who came not from money or power, the minister saw in me a person worthy of his attention. But that was not all. He saw a little bit more. He saw how difficult it must have been for me to be the only black person in the Ontario Legislature and a neophyte here, and the best part about all of this was I never had to say anything to him. He knew, as if he had a sixth sense. He had a sense of decency that I needed some help, someone to uplift and empower me, and I felt his acts of kindness were like he was saying to me, "I know that you can be just as good as me if I give you a hand up." He voluntarily took on the job of being there for me, much like a guardian angel. For that I thank him, and I say that he demonstrated to me, beyond the shadow of a doubt, what a kind and decent person he is.

On a professional level, I saw the minister as a person of the utmost integrity and sound judgment. When he spoke at cabinet, it was well reasoned and with much confidence. I saw the respect that other members accorded him and felt he was someone to emulate.

My feelings in this regard remain the same today as each and every day that I have been in this Legislature since 2007. Mr. Speaker, I am deeply saddened that I have to be here in this Legislature speaking to a frivolous and vexatious motion against someone who is a truly decent and respectable person of the utmost integrity. I beseech you to reconsider this motion in the interests of justice.

I would remind you that both the opposition and the third party did not just ask, but demanded, the cancellation of the plants. The residents of Oakville and Mississauga wanted the plants cancelled. The people spoke; we listened. That, Mr. Speaker, is the foundation on which democracy is built: listening to the people. We listened to the opposition party, too, and they all knew there was a cost to taking that step, but the principle of democracy triumphed.

It is time to stop the partisan games and get on with the people's business. This House has ground to a halt. The Tories spent all spring delaying—

Interjection: Who wrote this?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I wrote it myself, thank you very much. I speak from the passion that I believe is the truth.

The Tories spent all spring delaying the people's business. You have delayed the business of the House by ringing the bells ad nauseam and prevented this House from conducting the people's business. You asked for documents. We concluded the negotiations and we deliv-

ered the documents to you in compliance with the request. The document request has been satisfied. Now you're making a mockery of the institution of Parliament by impugning the reputation of an honourable minister, an honourable man who has served this province with distinction, to gain political advantage. That is not good.

What is occurring is unfortunate and not reflective of true justice. To my friends—and, yes, that includes all of you over there on the opposite side of this House—I know you have heard this phrase before, and I quote: “Be careful of the power you wield.” Today I say to you, do not rise up with a sword to strike our friend, our esteemed colleague, a person of great integrity and character, but rather rise above partisan politics and wield the sword of justice.

I would close by quoting someone I have truly admired, one of the greatest freedom fighters of all time and a person who truly understood justice, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, who once said, “True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.” In this House, justice should prevail.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now back to reality. I rise today to speak to the very serious matters before us and, like many who have spoken before me, I do so with purpose but without pleasure.

This time last year, my days were spent going door to door in my community of Burlington, talking to everyone I could about what mattered most to them: the issues and interests that gave them reason to get out of bed in the morning, the concerns that nagged them, the worries that kept them up at night. Going day to day and door to door, I never took anything for granted. I understood that long hours, challenging work and devotion to your constituents is what makes it possible for us to be here in this place. We are their allies and their advocates. We are guardians of their trust, and, together, of the trust of all the people of the great province of Ontario.

I will not claim that it is easy work, Mr. Speaker. I doubt any of us would, however long would have been served in this place. Politicians as a group have never had a smooth relationship with the people they serve. I know that from campaigning and from constituency work since being elected. Some people have very intense feelings about the work that we do, and not always in the way you would hope. But I am grateful for all political conversations, pleased to be in this House, and honoured as always to be working for the people of Burlington and Ontario.

That said, Mr. Speaker, I am deeply disappointed and saddened to be debating this matter. I am disappointed and saddened to have to plead the case that the people deserve to know what is done in their name, on their behalf, with their money. I am disappointed and saddened to have to argue that needless secrecy should be weeded out wherever it appears. I am disappointed and saddened to have to insist that when a government talks about its commitments to transparency and accountability, it means just that, full stop.

In its words and in its actions, this government has shown that it has no real commitment to transparency, that it apparently doesn't feel answerable to the people of Ontario. It pains me to say it, but that's where we are today. The government has not made a sincere and full disclosure.

1310

Once again, we are dealing with something that should, in a better world, be unthinkable: the political motivations surrounding the cancellation of two gas plants. We are trying to get to the bottom of a series of events surrounding the abuse of taxpayers' resources for nakedly political ends.

Speaker, we pursue this matter in order to fulfil our responsibilities as the official opposition and to ensure that the public interest is upheld. It is not a personal matter. It is not a partisan matter. It is a procedural matter. The Legislature has a right to these documents, and yet the Liberals continue to show disdain for these rights and privileges.

Commenting on this very serious debate, the Premier remarked to the Canadian Press that, “I'm hoping that the opposition will have their fun, come to their senses and recognize that we've got to move beyond this.” Speaker, this is not a matter of having fun, and I am frankly dismayed that the Premier views this matter so lightly.

The principle of responsible government is one where we charge cabinet to make decisions on behalf of the people of Ontario. In turn, the cabinet must be held accountable to the Legislature. This is a principle that goes to the very heart of our democratic system. No member, no minister, no party, no government can claim that it has a monopoly on the public interest. This is a matter that must be dealt with by the House as a whole, which can debate and decide this matter once and for all. The Speaker said as much when he noted that, “a decision to be selective with respect to production is a decision for the House or the committee.”

We do not pretend to know what exactly is missing from the package, but it is clear that it is far from complete. It is clear that the package does not comply with the Speaker's ruling and that the government's actions run counter to ancient parliamentary rights.

And it is equally clear that a point of privilege remains and we debate this matter here today because of the minister's conscious decision. The minister would have understood his decision challenged the rights and privileges of the Legislature and its members. It is a decision that the former Attorney General would have understood better than most; he would have known that he was courting a contempt ruling.

His refusal to fully disclose the request details took place on multiple occasions over several months, and every step of the way, he understood the road he was on. For reasons we cannot guess at, the minister has chosen to take the hit for his government. That is his choice and his choice only. This is a cabinet minister who has refused to completely disclose information related to the partisan cancellation of power plants and carefree

spending of taxpayers' money. They cannot go unchallenged.

Restoring the people's faith in government is without question the defining challenge of 21st-century politics. That's true around the world, but it is especially true in Ontario, a province whose government has spent most of the last decade reeling from scandal to scandal.

For the last nine years, the government opposite has demonstrated most of the worst habits of modern democracy. The people want to believe in better, and in order for us to transform this province into the Ontario that we know it can be, we need to do better.

Ontarians care about integrity. They want bold leadership, capable of making decisions that are courageous, necessary and right, and they expect their elected representatives to be true to more than just partisan lines and the politics of convenience. We are caretakers of a fragile trust, and each of us plays a very important role.

We must take steps to regain and maintain the confidence of our communities, and we must rebuild civic engagement among young Canadians who continue to feel the system neither speaks to them nor represents them. We must take steps to regain or maintain the trust of our constituents and our communities, because it is only through recapturing the respect and admiration of our citizens that we will restore Ontario to true greatness.

There was a rush of new blood in the House around this time last year and another since then, but unfortunately there are still too many reminders of the stagnant legacy, chronic mismanagement and misplaced priorities of the McGuinty government. Hansard is thick with their scandals—and two of those scandals are, of course, the cancellation of the power plants in Oakville and Mississauga. Through all of these sorry events, we have heard a lot of talk about transparency, but more to the point, we have seen a government that is secretive above all else, a government that is still apparently unable to deal with the reality of minority government.

Ontarians expect a government that is confident and competent enough to open its doors to the world without resorting to the black box hocus-pocus of backroom deals and a party loyalist turned super-connected lobbyist.

We've heard time and time again members opposite, sentimental and somewhat patronizing, talking about the noble PC governments of the past. I find these high-minded put-downs not only unbecoming but entirely out of place, given their own track record.

Contrary to the wisdom and advice of the power authority, the government made a hot political decision rather than a cool, rational one. The reason for the Oakville plant's cancellation, as we've heard from some members on this side of the House, was that the generating capacity predicted when it was commissioned was later found to be surplus to capacity. In other words, Ontario didn't need that plant. Ontario already had enough power—more than enough power—so much power that any additional plants would be unneeded. The realization came late in the game because the due diligence had apparently not been done before signing the contract.

Oversight and due diligence were also in question in Mississauga.

On September 24, 2011, just 12 days before the provincial election, the Premier announced that he was scrapping a controversial gas plant in Mississauga. Almost a year earlier, in October 2010, the Premier made a similar announcement that he was scrapping a \$1.2-billion, 900-megawatt power plant in Oakville that was already under construction. The loss of those two plants made it possible for the government to hang on to a handful of seats. These shamefully wasted resources, spent to do nothing at all, Mr. Speaker, except to make a problem go away, came at an enormous cost.

I've talked before about opportunity cost, the things that we could have done but now cannot because of our chosen course of action. The \$190 million, which was said to be the cost of the Mississauga cancellation, could have provided a year's tuition for 27,000 Ontario students. It could have paid for well over 6,000 cancer treatments or go to hiring more than 2,000 nurse practitioners. It could have made winter easier for vulnerable Ontarians, but of course it did not because this government had other priorities, because this government saw a more urgent need.

In light of these scandalous events, the people of Ontario have rightly asked: What was really going on? Who was calling the shots, and what were they thinking? Someone recently wrote that this was either incompetent planning or political opportunism, but it could have been both. The chain of events that led to this decision to cancel these plants speaks to the worst of government. It is trumped only by the decision made since then to suppress all details related to those cancellations in contravention of a parliamentary privilege and a breach of the Speaker's ruling handed down on September 13, 2012, when the documents were ordered released.

The notion floated by the government that these documents are complete is far-fetched on a number of levels. For one, as has been pointed out, they appear to contain no communications from the current or former Minister of Energy, and no communications from the Premier's office or from the Liberal campaign staff who, by some accounts, were shockingly involved in the decision to close power plants.

Those gaps are significant enough, but then there are the deletions, whiteouts and omissions, and intentionally blank pages, that are sprinkled throughout the documents. Attachments referenced in letters are routinely left out. Entire chains of correspondence are not even included in the so-called disclosure packages. These documents were delivered as supposedly complete, but they are clearly anything but that, Mr. Speaker. It's confusing.

The morning that they released these documents, the government announced that a settlement between the province and TransCanada for the cancellation of the Oakville power plant had been reached, and yet thousands of pages are missing or whited out within this raft of documents. At least 1,000 documents have nothing in them but a title.

Imagine for a moment someone cutting Genesis or Exodus out of the Good Book and then expecting you to accept what is left over as the Bible. That is the extent of the omission we're talking about here.

Picture yourself watching a film that had every 10th frame taken out. You would have a serious flicker. It would be like trying to focus on the bulb in a strobe light, Mr. Speaker. No reasonable person would believe for a second that they had just seen the extended director's cut, and yet that's the extent of omission we're talking about here.

1320

On the face of it, the documents that were tabled midday Monday would be, to most people, a crushing load, even if it was on a thumb drive. And indeed, 36,000 pages of documents sounds, to many Ontarians, like serious disclosure. Yet the questions we must ask are: Is this enough? Is this everything? In a matter such as this, in response to a request such as the one that has been made of this government to table all documents related to the cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville power plants, compared to "all," is "reasonably complete" enough, Mr. Speaker? I would argue it is not.

There are still glaring gaps in the government's account. What we have learned since this process first began in the spring is troubling enough. With each new account that the government has been prepared to offer Ontarians, there are as many shocking details as there are inconsistencies and inaccuracies.

The Mississauga plant cancellation that we were first told came at a \$180-million cost is soon discovered to have had another \$10 million attached to it. And as the member from Nipissing pointed out earlier this week, we have discovered an additional \$5 million since then. This is just one example related to one aspect of the closure of one of the two plants addressed in this request. There has been, and there continues to be, a pattern of evasion used by this government. Let's give them their due: They are very, very good at it. But the time has come to stop the spin.

When I came here, I was taken aback by the way this government, despite its talk of co-operation and collaboration, routinely snubbed suggestions from the parties opposite, how this government routinely ignored opposition members' input and generally behaved as if there was nobody else in the room, then acted as if we were the ones being difficult. That may be fair play during question period, but this is another matter entirely.

As I remarked in my maiden speech, the Legislature is an expression of our highest aspirations for ourselves as a people, and even though the right choices will often be hard to swallow, and while the chemistry of this session may be difficult, we must not flinch from making the decisions that are in the best interests of Ontarians. This is a case in point. We in the House now find ourselves in a strange and uncomfortable moment in Ontario's history. What we expected of this government was full disclosure; what we demanded of this government was full disclosure. Full disclosure was their legal obligation,

and it was a legal obligation that the government has clearly failed to honour.

Four months ago, there was an order issued compelling the Ministry of Energy to table all documents related to the cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville power plants. Earlier this month, that directive was repeated by the Speaker in a ruling that indicated that the government was bordering on contempt. It is clear that what the government has offered this Legislature and the people of Ontario is not the whole story. Transparency is transparency, Mr. Speaker. If you are being partially transparent, you are being opaque.

We've heard about this idea of unrecoverable costs and unstated costs—hundreds of millions, perhaps billions; so many zeros that you lose track. I would argue that not all of these unstated costs are financial. This government's actions have had, and will continue to have, a very real impact on the business of government. They will ripple through this House and across the province. And until this issue is resolved, there will be a very grave stain on the legacy and reputation of this government.

This failure to fully disclose does more than obscure the facts around an embarrassment to this Liberal government; it does more than impede the health of our system of government. It feeds cynicism and distrust around the entire concept of modern government. Ontarians expect better, and Ontarians deserve better. We, as Progressive Conservatives, and our leader, Tim Hudak, will offer that to all Ontarians. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Tuesday, September 25, 2012, was a sad day in the history of this House and will be recorded in history as such. The reason was the motion tabled in this House by the honourable member from Cambridge.

I rise in this House today to speak on this motion and express my deep disappointment. I have known the Honourable Chris Bentley for a number of years—five of those years as his colleague in this House, and after that, one year as his parliamentary assistant at the Ministry of Energy.

I want to take a few moments to talk about the accomplishments of the Honourable Chris Bentley in his portfolios. As we all know, he was elected to this House in 2003, and upon his arrival in this House, he was responsible for five portfolios. He was appointed first as Minister of Labour, then minister responsible for aboriginal affairs, then Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, then Attorney General, followed by the current ministry, Minister of Energy.

In his capacity as Minister of Labour, he hired 200 more health and safety inspectors. He ended mandatory retirement, which is a milestone in the labour history of this province. He raised the minimum wage, which was kept constant for the past 13 years by the previous governments. He established a review of the WSIB and

brought in radical improvements to help injured workers. He signed a federal-provincial deal to ensure employers paid payroll taxes and WSIB premiums.

At the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Minister Bentley launched Employment Ontario, providing newcomers with greater access to skills training and career opportunities. He revamped OSAP; introduced the Reaching Higher plan; provided a student access guarantee; introduced the pre-apprenticeship project and other apprenticeship training initiatives; and improved access to post-secondary education for aboriginal students.

In his capacity as minister responsible for aboriginal affairs, he established the \$13-million Métis development fund; strengthened the northern economy through the northern training partnership fund; signed a memorandum with First Nations to continue a tax exemption after the HST was introduced; and during his tenure, Ontario received a public service award from the United Nations for its work with aboriginal communities.

In his capacity as Minister of the Attorney General, the Honourable Chris Bentley reformed the Family Law Act to make divorce—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. There are several discussions going on in the chamber and it's very difficult to hear the speaker, so I'd ask you to keep your voices down.

Carry on.

Mr. Reza Moridi: He reformed the Family Law Act to make divorce proceedings faster and more affordable; introduced the Good Government Act; increased transparency for the justice system; provided more help for male victims of sexual abuse; introduced Justice on Target that reduced the average length of criminal case proceedings by 30%, which was a very important step forward in our justice system; reformed Legal Aid Ontario; launched Ontario's new human rights system, creating a tribunal and commission; resolved lawsuits more quickly by changes to monetary limits of the Small Claims Court; introduced stricter rules for young offenders who drink and drive; and updated provincial liquor laws.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of talk in this House about the decision being made to relocate the power plants in Mississauga and Oakville. In order to provide some context for the decision to move the power plants, I want to provide you with some examples of support from local residents and also local politicians.

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Gary Carr, chair of the regional municipality of Halton, on July 15, 2009, in a letter to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, writes: "The regional municipality of Halton calls upon the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure to terminate the procurement process to site any electrical generation capacity in the Clarkson airshed area that would adversely affect ambient air quality in the Oakville and surrounding area."

Emil Kolb, the chair of the regional municipality of Peel, on August 6, 2009: "The regional municipality of

Peel calls upon the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure to terminate the procurement process to site any electrical generation capacity in the Clarkson airshed area that would adversely affect air quality in the Clarkson area."

Terence Young, Conservative MP for Oakville, in a letter to the Premier, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, on November 9, 2009, writes: "Further to my October 15 letter wherein I enclosed 133 petitions opposing the planned gas-fired power plant in Oakville, I now enclose 35 additional petitions signed by concerned Oakville residents...."

In addition to these three politicians, we also had over 950 letters from members of the public sent in to protest the building of the Oakville power plant.

Mr. Speaker, interestingly enough, the opposition, on the other side of the aisle, also called upon the government to move the power plants. I want to take this time to read into the record just a few notable examples of the PC and NDP members showing their support for moving the power plants from Oakville and Mississauga.

The member from Halton—I'm quoting from Hansard, June 1, 2010: "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them."

MPP Toby Barrett, in a letter to Minister Duguid on June 21, 2010: "The potential for future alternate generation at Nanticoke to replace that slated for the proposed and disputed Clarkson plant should receive ample consideration."

The member from Halton, in a press release on September 14, 2010: "Minister, will you move the Oakville power plant?...."

"I am asking the minister to consider moving this plant."

The NDP leader, Andrea Horwath, on March 3, 2010, in the Globe and Mail: "Gas plants should only be a last resort and should be built away from densely populated areas."

Mr. Speaker, we took all the above advice into consideration and made the right and responsible decision. We are a responsive government and, as such, made the decision to move the power plants. We did what we were elected to do. We heard real concerns from families, local politicians and opposition members, and we responded. We wanted to ensure that no plant went forward in Oakville, and we took action.

The decision to move the plant to Lennox is creating local jobs, and the party on the other side is dead set against the creation of hundreds of local jobs in Napanee. Mr. Speaker, let me bring some quotes from local residents and politicians.

Gord Schermerhorn, the mayor of greater Napanee, is quoted in the Kingston Whig-Standard on September 25, 2012: "It's 600 construction jobs, 25 permanent jobs, and millions of dollars spent in the construction. It's going to be the most up-to-date plant that could possibly be. We're very happy about that."

Stephen Paul, who is the director for economic development for Lennox and Addington county, in the

Kingston Whig-Standard again, on September 25, 2012: "From an economic development perspective this is a significant investment by a private corporation and the government in our community. Any time we have that happen, which creates 25 new permanent jobs and up to 600 construction jobs, that's a pretty significant impact for Lennox and Addington county. This isn't something that comes around every day, and for a rural community, it will be a significant investment...."

"[T]hese are well-paying jobs, highly technical, highly skilled, and that's important for a community to be able to attract those jobs here."

Mr. Speaker, the motion passed in the estimates committee states: "that the Standing Committee on Estimates, herein 'the committee,' under standing order 110(b), stating that 'each committee shall have power to send for persons, papers and things,' directs the Minister of Energy as well as the Ministry of Energy and Ontario Power Authority to produce, within a fortnight, all correspondence, in any form, electronic or otherwise, that occurred between September 1, 2010, and December 31, 2011, related to the cancellation of the Oakville power plant as well as all correspondence, in any form, electronic or otherwise, that occurred between August 1, 2011, and December 31, 2011, related to the cancellation of the Mississauga power plant."

I just want to quote a few paragraphs from an article published in the *Globe and Mail* on Wednesday, January 16, 2002, under the title "Gag Order Keeps Nuclear Lease Secret."

"Energy Minister Jim Wilson is not able to speak freely about Ontario Power Generation, the main company he oversees as the province's electricity czar, because he has signed an unusual gag agreement...."

The agreement "places almost unheard-of control over what a minister is allowed to say in the hands of a company he oversees. It gives the company the ability to restrict Mr. Wilson's use of information, even though the province owns Ontario Power and presumably could issue directives to it...."

"Mike Krizanc, a spokesman for Mr. Wilson, defended the agreement, saying it protects Ontario Power in a competitive electricity market."

The motion that was tabled on Tuesday, September 25 by the honourable member from Cambridge, Dr. Rob Leone, states:

"I move that this House directs the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to table immediately with the Clerk of the House all remaining documents ordered by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012; and

"That the matter of the Speaker's finding of a *prima facie* case of privilege, with respect to the production of documents by the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to the Standing Committee on Estimates, be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which is hereby reconstituted as it existed on September 9, 2012; and

"That the committee shall be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair and shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012."

Mr. Speaker, the ministry staff began to work overtime to get the documents prepared in a diligent and responsible fashion. The motion set above shows the irresponsibility of the opposition party and the political games they are playing with not only this side of the House, but with the people of Ontario. I sat on the estimates committee and observed the minister responding in a very responsible manner to all of the questions put forward by the opposition. As a lawyer, the minister was very much aware of the sensitive nature of many of the documents provided. As such, he was not able to provide detailed answers to some of the questions due to solicitor-client privilege.

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Mr. Speaker, the motion asked for all correspondence which occurred over the 15-month period relating to the Oakville power plant and over the five-month period relating to the Mississauga power plant. As you can imagine, the set of requested documents would be quite significant in size. Not for a second did the members on the other side think about the unrealistic timeline they had set for the government to produce such a set of documents, documents which, when finally prepared and delivered, are now being attacked by the opposition in yet another political tactic to tarnish not only this government's reputation, but that of the Honourable Minister of Energy.

The minister complied with the ruling of the Speaker and the motion of the estimates committee. The minister released documents at a time when an agreement was reached and the interests of ratepayers would not be compromised.

There has been a lot of talk about blank pages and the sections being redacted or whited out. This is part of a very sad tactic by the opposition to taint and bring forward doubt about the documents which were provided by the Ontario Power Authority. So in simple form, I will try to address the topic of the redacted sections.

The motion brought forward at the estimates committee clearly states as follows—and I am going to paraphrase: "all correspondence, in any form, electronic or otherwise, that occurred between September 1, 2010, and December 31, 2011, related to the cancellation of the Oakville power plant as well as all correspondence, in any form, electronic or otherwise, that occurred between August 1, 2011, and December 31, 2011, related to the cancellation of the Mississauga power plant." This is exactly what was provided. The sections that appear to be redacted are sections that do not relate to the above motion and do not relate at all to the decision to move the Oakville and Mississauga power plant. It is that simple, honourable members of this House: We are not hiding anything. We have provided all documents requested, nothing more and nothing less. If they look at the documents, they will see that all pertinent information relevant to the committee's request and in line with the Speaker's ruling have been released to the Clerk.

It is sad to see the political games being played by the opposition. It is sad—the accusations of deception being made indirectly by the statements being made, in the nature that the documents provided are incomplete.

Mr. Speaker, we are here talking about a man who is highly respected in his riding, who is highly respected in the province of Ontario, who is highly respected as a lawyer, who is highly respected as a professor, who is highly respected as a member of this House, and who has been elected three times to this House, and a man who held five cabinet positions in the past nine years. He is a sincere man. He is a man with high dignity and integrity, sincerity and professionalism. The motion is nothing except tarnishing the remarkable reputation of such a human being.

I urge all members of this House to reject this motion. In particular, I urge the honourable member from Cambridge to withdraw this motion and let this House continue its business. Let this House continue dealing with the business of Ontarians.

My time is almost finished, but I'm just going to say a few words about Minister Chris Bentley's accomplishments as Minister of Energy and also his ministry's accomplishments in the past nine years. In the past nine years, just for example, we have created 10,000 megawatts of generation capacity in order to meet the power shortages which we faced in the past. We've invested \$13 billion in new generation since 2003. We have brought a renewable energy policy to Ontario. We are closing coal-fired plants. We have already shut down nine plants, and we are shutting down the rest in the next few years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Speaker, to get the business of this Legislature focused on co-operatively moving meaningful legislation forward through this House, I seek unanimous consent to reconstitute the Legislature's standing committees immediately with the existing committee structures as they existed on September 9, 2012.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I have a request for unanimous consent. Agreed? I heard a no.

Further debate? The member for Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Moving forward, again continuing on with the main motion—actually the amendment to the main motion of Mr. Leone, which is that this House direct the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to table immediately—immediately—with the Clerk of the House all remaining documents ordered by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, which is very key, Mr. Speaker: May 16. We're going back to then, and I'm going to bring that into the debate as I talk about this, because we're talking May 16 now, and here we are in September.

This went through on May 16: "That the matter of the Speaker's finding of a prima facie case of privilege, with

respect to the production of documents by the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to the Standing Committee on Estimates, be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which is hereby reconstituted as it existed on September 9, 2012." That is very key, because after September 9, we all realize what's taken place with the committees, as my good colleague our House leader brought forward. He tried to bring forward unanimous consent to reconstitute those so that we could continue on.

I'm going to enter this into the debate, and I'm going to respond to a significant number of earlier debates brought forward by the member from Peterborough as well as the Minister of Natural Resources and a number of others that I'm going to include in my debate.

"That the committee shall be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair": Now, I realize that in order to be in compliance with this, we have to ensure that the Speaker allows the prima facie case to come forward, which includes the correct wording, and of course that includes "at the call of the Chair." The Chair of the committee of finance and economic affairs prior to September 9 was a government member, so the concern there is what will take place, should this move forward at that particular time, and when this moves forward, regarding the ability of that Chair to call the committee to order.

There is an understanding that there are 10 days of time by which we will move forward, and I am moving forward and discussing the contents of the actual main motion and getting to the other part.

It "... shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012," and then it was amended by Mr. Leone to read "That the words 'November 19, 2012' be deleted and the following added: 'November 23, 2012,'" which was then re-amended by Mr. Tabuns: "That the words 'November 23, 2012' be removed and the following be added: 'November 26th, 2012.'"

Part of that is, as I mentioned, the wording "at the call of the Chair," and the concern, if it's chaired by a government member of committee, if that individual would call that committee.

I've sat in committee as a Chair in the past, in a previous government, and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, the record will show that I called a very contentious issue before my committee when I had that opportunity to utilize that 10-day period and I didn't. I moved forward with the calling of that. I'm not going to discuss that; that will be up to the government members to review those options. Quite frankly, the third party brought it before the committee at that time, and it was quite congratulated for the fact that we moved forward in the proper proceedings in the operations of the House.

You see, Mr. Speaker, when we're dealing with these operational functions of the House, we, as opposition, have certain abilities by which we can operate in this House, and that's complying with the rules and the guidelines that have been established and issued to every one of our members here and all members of all parties.

The Speaker has determined, quite frankly, that this debate is well within the rights and the rules that have been brought forward. We're hearing from a significant number of members that are coming forward today, and as they have yesterday, stating that it's a waste of time and it's inappropriate and all those matters. Well, quite frankly, the Speaker has ruled on that, and that is questioning the Speaker's ruling every time they say, "Stand up and say that," which is disallowed in our House. Quite frankly, we may be starting to call these individuals to question when they start to do it because I've now brought it forward that every time that they say that it is not right, that is questioning the Speaker's ruling, because he's decided that the debate is warranted and allowed to move forward.

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Now, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the rules and how debate proceeds and the fact that this is continuing on, all we need to do is look at the past—you may correct me; I'm not sure whether I'm in the right that if a member is no longer sitting in the House I can mention him by name—the actions of Mr. Curling in the House and the filibuster that took place at that time. Now, we only look and see what happened with the House and how the House reacted when we were in power at that time and what the opposition members did.

Interjection: They forget.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes, many of the members forget, and it's important for us to remind them of these things that have taken place.

Interjection.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Oh, yes. Well, there was a number of members that utilized that, an extensive period of time.

All governments go through a learning period, as we did when we first formed government in 1995. If you look at what took place with the NDP at that time, in regard to the large filibuster that took 10 days—10 days—with Bill 103, where we learned at that particular time—and I don't see it happen too often anymore—where we brought the bill to the committee of the whole as opposed to a separate committee. Once it entered the committee of the whole, that opened a whole new series of rules that allowed the opposition members to use those rules to their advantage, which allowed that 10-day filibuster at that particular time to take place to bring forward an issue at the expense of government and disallowing other actions moving forward in key business of the House. As opposition members, we only have certain aspects that we can use, which are the rules. We are complying with those, and we'll continue on to use those rules to our advantage in every aspect.

As I listen to the debate here today, I hear a certain two levels of debate taking place. I'll ask the members, or whoever else is watching, to look at Hansard. What is taking place is that we're hearing different key messaging coming forward from cabinet and from the other members of the government as it is taking place. You're certainly hearing three key specific aspects from

the cabinet members when they speak. One is very prominent, which is to support their member. What that tells me is when they're supporting the member, it's because a decision was made at a cabinet level—we only have to interpret what's taken place—and that those individuals were privy or part of the decision-making process, and they need to stand behind and support their member. That is coming forward very strong.

Not only that, but we're also hearing compliance. So first, it is support the member. Secondly is that they want to emphasize that there is compliance with the guidelines of the Speaker. That's being constantly mentioned, that here it has come forward that these individuals are complying with what's taken place, or the government is complying, with the Speaker's ruling and have complied with the timelines and everything given.

But what happened to the first date that I mentioned very clearly, that took place in estimates on May 16? It was from May 16 until September that we had to go to the Speaker in order to get the compliance to take place. So from that period—from May 16 to September—from our perspective we were not in compliance with the guidelines of the committee, which is the order of the House to produce this documentation. So compliance was not taking place in any way, shape or form in that until the Speaker had to step in and force the government to do so, which initiated the debate that we're now entered into.

Not only that, but the last thing that we're hearing from the cabinet ministers—so first was support of the member, second was that there's a compliance with the guidelines, as we're establishing, and thirdly was that the opposition parties were part of the decision-making process. Quite frankly, no. I mean, they're in government for a reason. They're in government to make decisions. They are the ones that made the decision, and from my understanding there is somewhat of an event that the government members will be attending this weekend to try to assure the attendees at their large event this weekend that "The other parties were all part of this process; it's not just us."

Well, quite frankly, that's not the case at all. What we're seeing here is that the decisions were made from the very support of the individuals who are coming forward being cabinet ministers supporting their cabinet colleague and would indicate that there is large compliance in that. The reason I mention that is, if we're dealing in a court where we're discussing these issues, look what took place with some of the other issues. What happened with, for example, eHealth? With eHealth, there was something substantially different: The minister stepped down. This minister—and quite frankly the minister in Ornge—is not stepping down. What might be the possible reasons for that? Well, look what happened. Our understanding was that the minister who was at the helm at eHealth when the Auditor General's committee brought it forward—I was a member of that committee—and then lo and behold that individual stepped down, and our understanding was that they would be put back into

cabinet, the next one to come back in. And lo and behold, that didn't take place.

I would question the members to look at the debate level by that individual who was removed from cabinet and the private member's bills that were introduced by that individual at that particular time. That certainly wasn't with government policy at those times and, quite frankly, broke ranks, and unfortunately the individual is no longer here with us to continue with us because they would be an individual of dissension, or perceived dissension.

What's taken place now is that—"No, we can't have that take place again. These individuals will remain in cabinet and we will stand behind them because we can't have the dissension in the ranks that came forward in the past," from the past experience when a cabinet minister was removed from their cabinet.

You only have to look and see—and we have to try and move forward with all these discussions of what's happening, and how we can try and make sense of it all in the fashion that we are given here.

I would certainly say—and to the government members, I would say—from what we're seeing here, that the government advisers are certainly well informed about all the details that have taken place. And I would make sure that, as a government member, any future aspects that come forward—that they're well informed on all these things that are happening, because quite frankly, the government members are hearing about this in their ridings on a regular basis. When the decision was made by cabinet, these individuals were not privy to it, from what I'm seeing and hearing and getting the sense of, to the extent that they should be, because of the sheer response that they're taking from the individuals—you want to make sure that—

Interjection.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Well, we all have that sort of perception, as my colleague the member from Durham mentions, about a mushroom aspect.

As I've said on a regular basis, the challenge to change is found through the analysis of self and the acceptance of fault and responsibility. In other words, we as individuals have to be able to stand up and find out for ourselves, and not be dependent on being given the information on a regular basis. So I would certainly hope that those individuals out there would make sure that, in the future—and any other possible others were coming forward.

We mentioned about the committees not being struck, Mr. Speaker—the Auditor General's committee. Well, this may be a little bit of a surprise, but if the Auditor General is not in committee every Wednesday and Thursday when it's sitting, the Auditor General is back out doing more research and finding other areas that may be contentious. Look at the Ornge issue and what was taking place there, and many other aspects coming forward that give the auditor more time, as opposed to being in committee, to do the research as necessary.

I want to get into some of the responses from the member from Peterborough and his remarks in the

Legislature. He had mentioned about a number of other issues dealing with government operations and funds, such as what I've already mentioned, regarding eHealth and what took place there. But the member from Peterborough had mentioned certain things such as the Spadina Expressway and what had taken place.

Interjection.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Of course, I was listening; I'm paying attention. Sometimes people are surprised but, yes, we sit, we listen; we don't look at the face but we listen to the dialogue—

I went and did the research on it; a couple of differences here. One is the payout in regard to the cancellation of the Spadina Expressway, which was not mentioned at all because, apparently, it didn't appear to be that there is any equivalency of payout in regard to that issue when it took place.

When we're talking about the lines, the \$220 million in transmission lines, the over \$200 million in the turbines along with the \$195 million, and in the area of \$650 million of a cost to cancel the plants, as compared to the Spadina Expressway, which didn't have that cost at all.

The other aspect about the Spadina Expressway was the fact that it didn't take place during an election, which was very concerning, because the other issue taking place during an election, you know—we constantly hear about the seat-saver component where individuals were saved seats as a result of it, but it didn't take place. So it was a little bit—not apples and apples; we're talking potentially apples and oranges here.

I'm going to go on about some of the other things the member from Peterborough mentioned. He mentioned the spring bear hunt and what had taken place there. Of course, the member would know that the courts in Kenora—when it was challenged in the courts—specifically stated that governments make political decisions on a regular basis and had every right to do that.

What he may not have mentioned was the article or the editorial in Ontario Out of Doors shortly after that. It was by Burton Myers, the editor and publisher of Ontario Out of Doors, where he specifically stated that he was surprised that it happened. Not that we weren't warned, mind you. It goes on to say that Conservative MPP Jerry Ouellette from Oshawa spoke to every individual possible, himself included, and everybody knew what was happening, but nobody did anything about it, just like him, because he was more concerned with taking the family to Vancouver on a vacation.

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The point being here, Mr. Speaker, that there was large dialogue. There were groups and organizations that were participating in that particular possible political decision that was made, yet what happened here? Where was the political decision? Where were the members? Quite frankly, that issue was discussed extensively within caucus on a regular basis, and a call to arms was sent out to every major organization—those in Peterborough and through the entire province—and nobody said anything

because it appeared that nobody cared on that issue. Where were the caucus members on this particular one and how informed were they? That's the point I'm trying to make here, Mr. Speaker; that it certainly didn't appear to be at the same sort of level.

Some of the other things that the member from Peterborough stated: Certain documents were determined to be on the ability of the committee to deal with, because it wasn't in the public interest. What the member had said was that the minister had determined that there were documents in there that would not be in the best public interests to decide. The difficulty with that is, when you make statements like that in the committee—which is giving guidance to the government or the ministers and direction on how things should happen—it should be followed through, and they weren't. The Speaker has made a decision, and guess what? That's why we're here debating that, because that decision was not a correct decision at that time.

To use the same comparison, though, during the Ornge committee debates, we had legal individuals who were sitting in the committee at that time to ensure that there was no disclosure of anything that might prejudice a future case coming out of that, to ensure that there was compliance with the guidelines of the committee and to ensure that, if there were other actions to take place, it could move forward.

What's happening here is, one committee is doing one thing—the Auditor General's committee brings in legal representation to make sure there's complete compliance and disclosure of all details—yet in the other committee it's, “No, we're going to decide. This is in the best interests and this is how it's going to unfold.” Well, the reason we're here debating this is because it was the wrong decision to be made. We want to make sure that future aspects like that don't continue on.

The Minister of Natural Resources had mentioned, I believe, that there was a political agenda here. Well, the political agenda is: We have rules and guidelines that we have to comply with. We only have the ability to use the rules to our advantage to move forward, to bring points forward to the public. A lot of the public in our constituencies are not well aware of what has taken place with the closure of these two plants, and we're trying to ensure that they are fully aware, that they are given the opportunity through media outlets and through the avail of this debate to continue on to gain a full understanding about what's taken place, how that decision was made and the end result of the cost to the taxpayers.

The movement of that plant was discussed by the previous member, from Richmond Hill, and the fact that there were hundreds of potential jobs. Were they saying there would not be those hundreds of potential jobs in Oakville when that took place? But also, the impact of that is that transmitting that energy required to those locations where it was set to come forward is going to have huge impacts, and we can talk a little bit about that. The Ministers of Energy and those energy experts, as my colleague from Durham is, talk about line loss. If you try

to send that energy from where the plant's going to go to where it was slated to go, you're going to have huge amounts of line loss, so you're going to have to produce more energy in a less effective manner and a more costly manner to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario. When you talk about these things like, “We're just moving it to another location,” there is huge impact that that's going to have.

We in Oshawa—and as the member from Peterborough mentioned, it was good to see that Ken Lewenza and the CAW and General Motors came to conclusion, that those individuals will be back in there. Quite frankly, I have some strong concerns that, at one point, General Motors in Oshawa had over 22,000 workers—we certainly don't have the numbers there that are there now. I can tell you, when we were given the privilege and honour to govern, the number one question was, “Do we have to work another weekend?” The number one question in today's economy is, “Have I got a job?” We want to make sure that we can do as much as we can to keep those people working everywhere, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the difficulty, though, Mr. Speaker, is that we have two different levels of compliance. So when the Minister of Natural Resources says that we have complied as the other ministers have in this House, what they're not talking about is the fact of what their understanding of compliance is. They bring a document forward that's 36,000 pages, but there are 1,000 pages whited out and potentially over 2,000 pages missing. How is that in compliance?

That is something else that needs to be determined, Mr. Speaker: At what level do we determine that compliance has come forward? Certainly when you receive documentation with a large number of pages—over 1,000 pages whited out and potentially over 2,000 pages that aren't even there because the trail seems to end at that particular point. From our perspective as opposition members, we will continue to use the rules to say that we don't think there's compliance here.

We would like the committee to move forward so that we can get down to the bottom of this. If the government is really concerned, I don't know why. It happened last in 2008. They haven't tried to move forward in asking for the question to come forward in order to move forward with their supposed agenda.

Those are the issues I wanted to bring forward, to make sure they're on the record, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to be involved in this debate today. The first thing I want to say is to put things into context.

Last Tuesday, the Speaker made a ruling, and that ruling has led to this debate here. That ruling basically said that—I'm not going to repeat it all—“While the Speaker may find that a *prima facie* case of privilege exists and give the matter precedence in debate, it is the House alone that decides whether a breach of privilege or

contempt has occurred, for only the House has the power to commit or punish for contempt.”

Then he finally goes on—and I’m just going to quote towards the end of it—and he says, “Either way, it is the House, not the Speaker, that is in the position to make that determination.

“That being the case, I understand that the member from Cambridge has been advised on what an appropriate motion would be in response to a *prima facie* finding of breach of privilege such as this. I will now turn to the member from Cambridge to determine if he does wish to proceed with that motion.” The member from Cambridge did proceed and produced a motion, and the motion basically says, “That the matter of the Speaker’s finding of a *prima facie* case of privilege, with respect to the production of documents by the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to the Standing Committee on Estimates, be referred to Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which is hereby reconstituted as it existed on September 9, 2012; and

“That the committee shall be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair, and shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012.”

That’s the motion that’s in front of us. It has been amended twice, both changing the date—one was moved to a different date, becoming November 23, and then a further motion changed the date to November 26. We’re presently debating that second amendment. We are going through that process. We’re still discussing the main point that the Speaker brought forward on this issue. Since there are two amendments, we follow the rule that we debate the amendments first. We’re debating the second one regarding the date, and we could actually potentially, after that’s dispensed with or voted upon or put aside—then we’d have the first amendment to deal with. Every member would have a chance to speak for 20 minutes. There are 107 members in total. The Speaker doesn’t speak, so conceivably 106 members could speak on this, not once and not twice but three times, on the second amendment, the first amendment and the motion itself.

Everything in this House has been brought to a grinding halt as we deal with this issue. We started dealing with it on Tuesday. There were speeches made on Tuesday, speeches made on Wednesday and there are speeches being made today, on Thursday, and we’re still on the second amendment. We don’t meet here on Friday. We come back on Monday and we’ll continue. We’ll continue with the second amendment, and go back to the first amendment later and debate that. A whole new set of speakers line up and debate that first amendment. Finally, once that’s dealt with by 106 members, we can conceivably go back to the first actual motion that was put forward by Mr. Leone from Cambridge and actually debate his motion. From a procedural point of view, Mr. Speaker, we could be here for a week, a couple of weeks or several weeks if we decide to take this out to the full extent.

What I want to do is just bring out my point on this. The Speaker basically said in his ruling on Tuesday that

“I think there’s a case potentially of a *prima facie* breach. Therefore, I’m going to let the House decide. You guys talk it out, debate it amongst yourselves and decide whether or not we’re going to find a case of contempt.”

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So we could be here for days and weeks discussing this, and as a part of parliamentary procedure, we go through this exercise. There’s no real rule written down somewhere that it’s exactly what we have to do. It doesn’t say, “You must do this, this and this and therefore find this.” It’s all part of the parliamentary custom or tradition that exists, not only here but in Parliaments throughout the world, and these customs or traditions are unwritten rules that are followed by a legislative body.

For example, in this Legislature, when the day begins, there’s a parade that comes in. I think it comes from downstairs. The Speaker comes in with the clerks and the Sergeant-at-Arms. They come in and bring the mace in. The Speaker takes his chair, and then the Sergeant-at-Arms puts the mace down and goes to his seat and sits down, and the day begins. There’s no rule—you won’t find that anywhere in the standing orders—but that’s what we do as a tradition or a custom in here.

My argument today is that there’s nothing written about what we’re doing today, but it’s going to be basically determined by custom and procedure. We can debate this, finish the debate in the next day or two, or we can go on for several weeks. We could send it to the committee, or we could decide, “No, let’s end it here and vote on it here”—either send it there or not. So there are many options in front of us, and these are not necessarily options that we have to follow. We can do whatever we want, basically, on this issue.

What has happened here is that the matter has become extremely political. We’ve got the opposition saying, “Let’s go on. There is a case of contempt here, and let’s go forward and punish the minister responsible, the Minister of Energy, or else we keep on debating this.” We, as members of the government, have gotten up and defended the integrity—and I do too—of the Minister of Energy, and there’s no doubt about that, his integrity and so forth, but we have also discussed the fact that he’s an honourable man and that we should end this now.

But I think the point that’s trying to be made here, in my view, listening to the many speeches, is whether or not we should politicize this and punish one member of this Legislature for an action that he supposedly did. In my view, he released the documents, 36,000 pages of documents, as requested by the Speaker, and fulfilled the request that was made. The opposition wants to take it further and has decided to go into this whole issue of punishing the Minister of Energy even further. My argument is that, as custom and tradition, we should not go any further. The thing should come to an end, and that should be it.

I’m going to give you an example, Mr. Speaker, which we all know well. The budget is usually presented in the Legislature, but there’s no rule that says that Ontario’s budget shall be held in the Legislative Assembly at

Queen's Park. So several years back, the Premier at that time, Mike Harris, and many of his cabinet ministers and colleagues in government at that time decided to hold the budget at Magna, an auto parts plant located here in the GTA, some part of the greater Toronto area. There was outrage about it. There was outrage from the public, the media and the opposition that the Magna budget was held outside of here, but there was no rule written that the budget had to be introduced and discussed here in this Legislative Assembly. It was still allowed to be presented as a budget because, again, parliamentary custom and procedure are unwritten rules, and basically the most important thing was, in that government's view, to present the budget at that time of year, springtime of that year, and they decided not to have it here and to have it somewhere else. This assembly was vacant, and there was not a single person sitting in their chair. I think some opposition members were here for a few days, and then they left and everything was shut down. The budget was communicated through the media from the Magna plant. The point that I want to make, again, is that at that time the members came back here to Parliament, to the Legislature—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Could I ask you guys to keep it quiet or take your conversation outside? I'm trying to listen to him, and you're very close to me. Thank you.

Carry on.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Getting back to the Magna budget, at the end of the day, when the members of the Legislative Assembly came back, the motion was put forward—I think it was by the opposition—to find that the government was in contempt of the Legislature for holding that budget outside this Legislature.

The same is happening today. There is an attack by the opposition saying that the Minister of Energy is in contempt. But the problem is, in contempt of what, and for what reason? He complied in every respect with what was requested by the Speaker, and he presented 36,000 pages of documents, information around the two plants that were being constructed in Oakville and Mississauga. That information was released last Monday night, I believe. The next day, there was a motion put forward to take this to a committee and look for a *prima facie* case of contempt.

I think it should stop at that point. We don't need to go any further than what the Speaker requested us to do: discuss the issue amongst ourselves. It becomes personal when we decide, "You know what? Let's go after the Minister of Energy and embarrass him in front of his colleagues, in front of his family and in front of the public in general." I think that's wrong. Based on tradition and parliamentary custom, he did comply with the Speaker's request, and we all know here that he complied. He released the 36,000 pages.

The opposition has mentioned several times that many of the documents were whited out. What I think really

happened was that they were photocopied over one night. I don't know when it was, but they were released, I think, on Monday at noon, so it must have been on Sunday—I'm not sure exactly when—that the documents were all put forward. The Minister of Energy, who is an honourable man, as a member cabinet, basically said, "These are honestly all the documents that I have," and gave them to the Clerk.

The Clerk's office then photocopied them. I don't know how they could do it so fast; 36,000 pages is a lot of documents. Now it could be that you have a page similar to this one with some information on it, and it could have been photocopied on the other side, so you end up with a blank page, and someone says, "This has been whited out." I'm not blaming anybody here, but it could be that perhaps, in those 36,000 pages, a couple of the pages were photocopied on the back.

Mr. Jeff Leal: That's what happens with those keys, right? What do they call them? EB keys?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Yes, you basically take a USB device, which stores memory, and you photocopy all these 36,000 pages. Then you put them into a USB memory device.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Stick.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Memory stick. Thank you, member from Peterborough.

Then that's handed over to the opposition. The opposition then puts it in their computer, presses print and 36,000 pages are printed. I would never, ever point my finger toward the Clerk's department or any other department here. At the end of the day, we're accountable for what happens in this Legislature.

So you get 36,000 pages and some of them are blank. The opposition is going to jump on it and say, "Aha, a blank page. It's been whited out." Well, it can be the photocopier itself that is copying pages and then accidentally copies a blank page. So let's not jump to conclusions here and say the minister—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Should have been a Xerox—better quality.

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Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: We should not jump to conclusions that some pages were whited out. I mean, 36,000 pages is a lot of pages to review. I think we would be best served if the opposition looked at those pages, reviewed the pages that are there—the 36,000—and then determined whether or not all the information has been provided. The minister has said, "These are all the documents I have." He signed a letter saying, "These are all the documents that I have in my possession," and all these documents have been released now. They're public.

The opposition and the public in general have a chance to look at these documents, and they're doing that right now. It doesn't take a day or two; I think it takes several days. You want to follow up on some of the information that's in front of you to make sure that everything has been complied with and, if not, then argue that later on.

But the most important thing of all is that there is a certain tradition in here, parliamentary custom, unwritten rules that we follow. The minister has complied with what was requested. The Speaker said there may be a *prima facie* case of contempt, of breach here, and basically said, "Members of the House, do it yourselves. Discuss it amongst yourselves and determine amongst yourselves what to do." There was a motion that was passed on Tuesday morning, which I mentioned. The member from Cambridge asked that this matter be taken to a committee and be debated there and reported back, whether that be November 16, November 23 or November 26.

My argument is that that's not necessary. I think the documents are there, the information has been released. In my view, if the Speaker were to ask me, "What do you think, member from Scarborough Southwest?" I would say that the minister has honourably complied with the request that was made by the opposition. The documents are out, and they have a chance to review them.

I think this Parliament would be better served if, instead of pushing aside all business to argue this motion in front of us, which we've done, we had regular proceedings, which include an hour every day between 10:30 and 11:30, question period, to ask questions. That's when the opposition has a chance—

Mr. Frank Klees: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, given the gravity of the topic under discussion, I would ask if you would check for a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Check that we have quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is present.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A quorum is present. Proceed.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm not sure if that's parliamentary procedure or custom, I'm not sure if it's written down. It is written down, actually, in the standing orders.

What I'm trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is that we have complied and the minister has complied, and we are not utilizing the time and this institution in the best way possible. I think that the most important thing is that if we were involved in regular business, the opposition could hold us accountable, hold the government accountable, using the documents they have obtained, by asking questions of the minister, the Premier or any other member of the executive council, otherwise known as cabinet.

Instead, we have decided to descend into this debate, and I think it lowers the institution. Other members have articulated it much better than I have, but it lowers this institution completely to a much lower level when you have this kind of debate. The better road to have taken is to have received those documents, read them, come to question period and start asking questions of the gov-

ernment. We had Tuesday, Wednesday and today where there has been no question period at all, and if this goes on next week or for several weeks after, you're going to have question period deferred or cancelled or not held at all, and the truth will not come out, because we're not actually involved in asking any of those questions, if the opposition has concerns, and holding the government and the minister and the Premier accountable for what happened with those two gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga.

In my view, it's unfortunate. We all know, when we walk out of here at the end of the day, what has happened, what we're doing here, and that's the opposition trying to embarrass or censure or find that the Minister of Energy is in contempt of this Legislature. I don't think he is; I think he complied. He released the 36,000 pages and he fulfilled the request made by the opposition. The Speaker basically has said, following his own parliamentary custom and procedure, "You know what? I'm not going to rule on this. Let the members here discuss it and bring me back a recommendation or a finding."

Mr. Speaker, I know I've gone on on this one issue, but it really speaks to me a lot. I have not argued the issue of the integrity of the minister because there is no question that he has integrity; there's no question that he's an honourable man. The issue becomes procedure. In my view, the better way to proceed would have been to have question period and follow those procedures rather than stall this Legislature and bring to a grinding halt the work that is required to be done by this Legislature for the good of the taxpayers and the people who live in Ontario, the approximately 13 million people who live in this province. That's what I'm here to do. I'm here to work for that instead of trying to politicize this and trying to go after one member and embarrass him.

I thank you for the opportunity. I would like to go on longer, but I understand my time is 20 minutes, and that time has been completed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Let me begin by asking all of you to think back to September 2011, if, like me, you were engaged in the ritual of elections. In my case, I remember this particular date in September 2011 because a call came to me that I needed to be at someone's house in the Holland Marsh, part of my riding. That was because at another point—that is, in Mississauga—the McGuinty Liberals announced that they would not be proceeding with the Mississauga gas plant. The government has admitted that this decision was done in reaction to overwhelming community opposition prior to the last election campaign. There's a quote: "This was a campaign undertaking at a time when I think we were still behind in the polls, so it required a government decision, which occurred after the election." This is the quote of the finance minister in estimates on July 19, 2012.

I remember that morning very well because the press was there, the mayor was there, other community leaders—but most importantly, the people who lived right in the immediate neighbourhood. We were all there because

the government had decided that this was a good location for a peaker plant: in northern York region.

I'll come back to that in a moment, but I want to set the stage because of the fact that, very clearly, we have an admission that this was a political decision. This had nothing to do with whether it was necessary.

I want to jump ahead to September 13, 2012. This is when Speaker Levac rules that there is a *prima facie* breach of privilege and says that Bentley is obligated to table documents and Parliament has an absolute right to call for people, papers—that would be papers that have stuff printed on them—and things, per the standing orders and ancient rights.

As a result of the Speaker's ruling, it became very, very clear that there were certain ground rules, just two of them. The one quote, "The right to order production of documents is fundamental to and necessary for the proper functioning of the assembly"—and with all due respect to the previous speaker, I would suggest to him that blank pages do not offer that opportunity. The Speaker goes on further: "The House has never set a limit on its power to order the production of papers and records." Certainly, we've heard comments to the contrary by those across the aisle.

The other thing that I think is important to set the stage is also the question of, what does it mean to have a contempt ruling against you? The Oxford Dictionary describes it as "a feeling that a person or thing is beneath consideration or worthless, or deserving scorn or extreme reproach."

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I think it's important to keep that in mind because, besides the question of the contempt of the minister in the case that the Speaker has ruled on, I'm going to suggest that there's a greater contempt. There's a greater contempt that's greater and much more than that of a single minister. It is the contempt for good and honest government and for the people of Ontario.

I look back at some of these demonstrations of what I consider to be the greater contempt. We look at a billion dollars wasted on eHealth without any kind of transparency. We look at the months that we have tried to bring to scrutiny the whole debacle of Ornge, and then the Premier stands in front of us and urges us to hasten passage of Bill 50. Of course, he didn't introduce it, necessarily, at the point at which he was asking us to debate it. But he's described that, particularly Ornge, as something that shouldn't be repeated, almost assuming a kind of mea culpa, that "I've got a bill now that will cover off everything that went wrong." Of course it leaves out the fact that Ontario had a very successful air ambulance service for decades prior to the Ornge scandal. Most recently, he explained his position of this sort of mea culpa arrangement when he discussed, only a day or two ago, the success of the gas plants, and, well, it was only two gas plants that were a problem out of 17. I think many of us would say that this demonstrates a greater contempt.

When you start looking at some of the pieces of legislation and some of the decisions that have been made, I

think it becomes clearer, when you look at no clear, coherent or scientifically based system of planning for public policy in the province of Ontario. I'm reminded of the Green Energy Act, with no local input. I look at the decision to put a gas plant in Bath, which is just this side of Kingston, and that is going to require a grid improvement to be able to get to GTA west—a \$200-million improvement. And there's no transparency in our system. We asked for months to know the details of Samsung. Actually, I think that's when we found out what redacting means.

But the question, then, that that really begs when we're talking about the greater contempt is, why didn't this government establish clear policy for our energy needs for the whole province? How difficult is it to find out what global positioning means? That's a line hidden on the electricity bill. Why didn't it simply follow the environmental assessment process to decide whether energy plants adversely affected human health and the environment? If the government knew how to plan for the future, it wouldn't have the problems it has had building new plants. It wouldn't have panicked in the election and cancelled the Mississauga plant. So I think it's really important to understand that there is a bit more to the contempt, as we begin to look at some of the actions taken by this government.

I mentioned already the Green Energy Act, which was to eliminate the possibility of a NIMBY influence. I think there's a certain irony now when you look at what's happened in Mississauga and Oakville, a very expensive NIMBY influence, I think. But part of the revolutionizing of energy production was the dismantling and decommissioning of the coal-fired furnaces.

In 2001, Elizabeth Witmer, the then Minister of Energy, announced the closure of the Lakeview generating station. In the election of 2003, both the Liberals and the Conservatives promised to close down the rest of the electricity-generating coal-fired furnaces. The difference was that the Liberals promised the completion by 2007; the PCs by 2015. I remember asking the minister, why the difference in timing? Simply put, one was the assessment of experts; the other, wishful thinking. Today we have reduced coal-fired energy in the province, but no party can claim to have a monopoly on the decision to close down those furnaces, despite the rhetoric of the government.

As part of the shift, gas plants were introduced—northern York region was a site. I want to take members back to the time when the member for Oakville was busy trying to get the plant stopped in Oakville. I had the opportunity to speak to his bill, and I made a few comments at that point that my constituents were undergoing, obviously, the same kind of concerns with the energy plants: "The government first tried to meet this need by building new power lines" and then they changed and decided to go to a peaker plant.

"I note that the member for Oakville wants to ban peaker plants from coming any closer than 1.5 kilometres to a school or a residential area.

"Let me inform this House that the peaker plant planned for my riding is a lot closer than 1.5 kilometres from the Holland Marsh District Christian School." The plant, as proposed at that time, beside the Holland Marsh itself—the source of most of our summer vegetables in Ontario, and on the very land that this government "thought vital to be included in the greenbelt.

"A few short years ago," they had "deemed this land to be protected from intrusion. Now the government," at this time, was "prepared to sacrifice the principles of its own greenbelt law."

So the question, then, of the greater contempt grows, as you can tell.

The next opportunity was a couple of years ago, when the Environmental Commissioner made some comments about the government's decision. He "revealed the sham that is this government's environmental protection system. He revealed that local citizens had made multiple requests to bump up the peaker plant in my riding to a full environmental assessment. He said that the requesters made compelling arguments.

"People are worried about possible impacts of the proposed natural-gas-fired generator on local farmland and water, and whether the plant conforms to local and provincial planning policies. The province denied their request, and the commissioner said that if a request was not granted in this case, it is difficult to imagine a situation when such a request would be approved. In fact, the commissioner could not find any bump-up requests that this government has granted."

So it doesn't use its own laws; it wants to exempt the whole project from the Planning Act; and as I say, it is a demonstration of these issues.

I note these examples from my own riding to illustrate a point. We would not be here debating this contempt motion if it wasn't for the government's confused, ramshackle and frankly incompetent approach to our energy system. The power plants in Oakville and Mississauga were proposed and are necessary because we need the power; because the Liberals plan on closing all of Ontario's coal plants; because the Liberals aren't making any lasting decisions on our nuclear plants. So they went ahead with these power plants but got cold feet during the election.

This government has shown contempt for many in our community. One only has to look, more recently, at its contempt for the horse racing industry, its 60,000 jobs, its \$2-billion contribution to the Ontario economy. The horse racing industry had a contractual arrangement that this government cast aside. Hard-working, successful people in the industry woke up one morning to find their lives, their incomes and their futures destroyed by the stroke of a pen. Some \$50 million was tossed their way to help them go bankrupt and unemployed and euthanize their horses. This is surely contempt for law-abiding citizens of Ontario.

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When we look at the problems of the deal that has been made, when we look at \$450 million to be used for

the transfer of these plants, there are more examples of the greater contempt when you think of how badly this province needs (a) its energy and (b) its transparency and rules to be able to follow and to be able to grow our economy. Instead, we toss money aside, surely to the contempt for law-abiding citizens.

It is a group not yet mentioned for whom this Liberal government has demonstrated its greatest contempt: my constituents, those people who live in places like Port Bolster, Cookstown, Bell Ewart to Cook's Bay and many places in between. Those people are the people who work hard to raise their children, to pay their mortgages. Those are the people who coach a sports team, support the Lions and take pride in their community and its well-being. They obey the laws and pay their taxes.

They are also like the vast majority of Ontarians. They want to have respect for the people they elect. They want to trust the people they elect to act with the greater good in mind, to act prudently and judiciously with their money. They have witnessed the opposite. They have witnessed millions of dollars tossed away for the convenience of a political party desperate to save seats. They have watched how the infrastructure of a complex process like the siting of a gas plant and the accompanying environmental process—even the bricks and mortar already in place—can disappear with the ease of seeds from a dandelion in a warm summer breeze.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's a great metaphor. It's a wonderful metaphor.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you.

"Contempt" is described as "a feeling that a person or a thing is beneath consideration." Feelings are not static. They grow in strength or gradually dissipate. The danger of contempt is that this feeling will grow. It will be fed by cynicism, directly related to lack of plan, lack of accountability, lack of transparency, money tossed to cover up and to silence, and rules as flexible as an elastic, led by a Premier who, at the end of the day, must answer to the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I rise today to debate this motion with much sadness. Mr. Speaker, let us begin with the facts. In the 2011 provincial election, all three parties promised to cancel the Mississauga gas plant if they were elected. As a matter of fact, Mr. Hudak, on October 5, one day before the election—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I have order in the opposition benches?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: As a matter of fact, Mr. Hudak, on October 5, one day before the election, considered cancelling the gas plant in Mississauga so important to his electoral results that he spent that morning staging a media event at the site of the gas plant, telling anyone who would hear him out that he would cancel the gas plant if he became Premier.

Asked by the media if he would scrap the Mississauga plant if he formed the next government, Hudak replied,

"That's right. Done. Done, done, done." So this was not a promise buried somewhere in the Conservative Change-book. Oh no. This promise was front and centre for Mr. Hudak, and the same goes for the NDP—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): May I remind the member that the rule of the Legislature is that we do not refer to people by name. We do so by their riding or their title. Carry on.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Given this context, as a relatively new MPP it is indeed very disappointing as well as astonishing that the opposition would now turn around and accuse us of doing something that they themselves promised to do. Even a grade—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Once again I'll ask the members: The previous speakers had total silence of the House, and everybody was listening. I would expect us to provide the same to the current speaker. So I'd ask your indulgence. Thank you.

Carry on.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, even a grade 3 child would intuitively know that to behave this way is to have no credibility. This is feigned outrage at its worst.

The other issue is, what would the opposition have done had they formed government? Their options would have been to break their promise and continue to build a gas plant, or start negotiations to cancel the plant and incur the costs associated with it—I repeat, incur the costs associated with it.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Lambton—Kent, you're warned.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Mr. Speaker, I would like both opposition parties to explain here in the House exactly what they would have done. Would they have broken their promise, or would they have kept their promise and incurred the costs associated with it?

Instead of acknowledging that outcomes would have been similar, given that all three parties promised the same thing, they choose to play dirty politics, the kind of needless politics that have ground the business of the Ontario Legislature to a halt again. The Tories spent all spring delaying the people's business, and now this.

On Monday, Speaker, I had been looking forward to having a third reading vote—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Chatham—Kent, you're warned.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: —about the healthy home renovation tax credit, something that will improve Ontarians' lives and help our seniors. Instead, the opposition has hijacked the Legislature to debate the nuances of documents they admit they haven't even read in full.

Let's remember what happened here. The Tories asked us for some documents. We made the case that providing these documents would compromise our ability to negotiate with TransCanada. We then concluded the negotia-

tions, and the opposition received all 36,000 pages of documents that complied with their request. We followed through. The government even went so far as to put each and every document on a USB key and provide one to each of the opposition parties, in addition to the Clerk. The request of the committee for these documents has been satisfied. The matter should be over.

Instead, what we have from the opposition is nonsense like this statement on September 25 from the member from Cambridge. I quote from Hansard: "It's now the end of September, and we're just getting a few more trinkets of documents..." Speaker, since when did 36,000 records constitute trinkets of documents?

We should be standing here today working together, debating legislation to make this province a better place. Instead, we're debating this contempt motion. Why are we doing this? Speaker, we are doing this because the opposition is trying to throw any mud, any mud they can against the wall in a desperate attempt to see if anything sticks. This motion is purely about partisan politics, nothing more. They're making a mockery of the institution of Parliament. Ontarians deserve better.

I started with a brief background of the facts. I will now take the time to take a slightly more detailed look at how we got here. As I'm sure the members of this House are aware, the OPA contracted to have the Oakville facility built to meet the energy demands of the area at the time. The Ontario Power Authority contracted with TransCanada Energy Ltd. in September 2009 to design, build and operate, over a 20-year term, a 900-megawatt natural-gas-fired electricity generating station in Oakville. In October 2010, the government determined that the project would not proceed. It's a decision that was not only supported by the local community, but was supported by the Leader of the Opposition and the Ontario PCs.

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Hansard, June 1, 2010, and I quote the member from Halton: "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them."

The Globe and Mail, September 25, 2011, and I quote the Leader of the Opposition: "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga."

While no formal litigation resulted from the government's decision, the government and TransCanada had been engaged in formal arbitration and confidential settlement discussions until a resolution was successfully reached on September 24, 2012.

With respect to the Mississauga facility, in April 2005 the Ontario Power Authority contracted with Greenfield South Power Corp. to develop and operate a 300-megawatt natural-gas-fired electricity generating station in Mississauga. Over the course of the next number of years, particularly as construction got under way at the facility, community concerns were brought to the attention of the government, and of all of the political parties during the fall 2011 general election campaign.

The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party and the Ontario New Democratic Party made a commitment

during the course of the campaign to cancel the plant. Shortly after being re-elected, our government announced its intention to relocate the Mississauga facility. In this case, there were some formal litigation proceedings under way, as well as confidential settlement discussions in relation to the cancellation of this project, until a resolution was successfully reached on June 10, 2012. After some long and hard negotiations, the OPA and the proponent reached a deal to relocate the 300-megawatt natural gas plant on part of Ontario Power Generation's Lambton generating station site. The new site will take advantage of existing transmission and other infrastructure, as well as the expertise of local workers. The construction of the plant is expected to provide up to 200 jobs over the next two years.

Over the course of the past several weeks, Speaker, the official opposition and the third party have attempted to create a myth, a myth that the Minister of Energy willfully attempted to hide or conceal these documents from the Legislature. Nothing, Speaker—nothing—could be further from the truth.

Let's look at the facts. Between May 9 and July 11, the Minister of Energy appeared before the Standing Committee on Estimates for the purpose of answering questions regarding the 2012-13 estimates of the Ministry of Energy. While the minister answered questions relating to a number of issues, the committee members from the official opposition spent a lot of time asking the minister questions relating to the two gas plants which were to have been built in Oakville and Mississauga, respectively. While before the committee, the Minister of Energy was placed in a difficult position. He was repeatedly asked to answer questions relating to the Oakville and Mississauga facilities. The overwhelming majority of the questions related specifically to the ongoing outstanding legal proceedings and confidential negotiations. The Minister of Energy attempted to strike an effective balance between the committee's authority to ask these questions and request these documents and the need to protect the public interest in the midst of highly sensitive commercial negotiations and litigation. He has a responsibility as a minister of the crown, and it is different from the responsibilities that we have as members.

The Chair of the committee, the member for Beaches—East York, to his credit, recognized the precarious situation of the Minister of Energy. In fact, he repeatedly ruled that while committee members were permitted to ask such questions, the minister was able to exercise his discretion and respond to such questions in a manner that protected the interests of the province. I quote the member for Beaches—East York from Hansard on May 16: "The minister has the right to decline either giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during his answering of the questions."

Again I quote the Chair of the committee, the member for Beaches—East York, from Hansard on May 16: "I would advise that I'm going to allow the motion to proceed, but I would also advise—and I think the minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may

choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and I would expect him to do so. That would be my ruling."

So, Speaker, here we have a member of the opposition acknowledging that the Minister of Energy was in a difficult situation and did need to protect the public interest.

The minister relied on the Chair's repeated statements and rulings that the minister was permitted to respond to questions and document requests from committee members in a manner that protected the interest of the province, an interest that now seems to be lost on the opposition. As a result, the minister wrote to the committee on May 30 and advised the committee that he was exercising his discretion and would not be able to produce the requested documentation, as they were confidential, subject to solicitor-client privilege, litigation privilege or highly commercially sensitive. Unfortunately, the official opposition ignored these flags that were raised by the minister. They showed no restraint, something we've seen so often, unfortunately, from the Ontario PC Party in this place.

On June 5, the member from Cambridge moved a motion to report to the House the minister's failure to produce all responsive records pursuant to the motion of May 16 and to kick-start these contempt proceedings. The official opposition and the third party, in their attempt to vilify the Minister of Energy and score cheap political points, will tell you that the minister hid or concealed these records. Speaker, it's simply not true. Let's deal with the facts. The record shows that the Minister of Energy at all times was trying to balance two important yet competing public interests: the supremacy of Parliament versus the protection of taxpayer interest.

Here is the best proof of all, Speaker: On July 10, the minister announced that the OPA had reached an agreement with Greenfield to relocate the Mississauga facility and that the government had accepted the OPA's recommendation to relocate the Mississauga facility to Lambton station in Sarnia. In addition, the minister announced that he had settled the related civil proceedings in the state of New York. The legal matters relating to the Mississauga gas plant having been settled, the minister directed his ministry to provide the committee with all correspondence relating to the Mississauga facility that was responsive to the motion of May 16, except for records that were subject to solicitor-client privilege. These documents were provided to the committee.

Speaker, I ask this House: If the Minister of Energy was trying to hide or conceal the documents, why would he have released them the moment—I repeat, the moment—he had a settlement with respect to the Mississauga gas plant? Let's deal with the facts, folks. As negotiations with TransCanada regarding the Oakville plant were still going on—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oxford, come to order.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: —the minister was not in a position to produce the documents prior to the Speaker's ruling. On September 13, 2012—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member, please have a seat. Point of order, the member for Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, for five weeks now the Liberal House leader has refused to re-strike standing committees of the Legislature. I wish to ask for unanimous consent to re-strike so we can continue the investigation into the Ornge—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

Carry on.

1500

Ms. Dipika Damerla: On September 13, 2012, the Speaker ruled—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I asked for unanimous consent. I didn't hear the Speaker ask if there was unanimous consent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We're in the middle of someone's speech.

Carry on.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: On September 13, 2012, the Speaker ruled that while a prima facie breach of privilege had been established, he would set aside the matter and ask the three House leaders—

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order: the opposition House leader.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I respectfully request that you reconsider. The honourable member from Oxford was completely within his rights, within the standing orders of this House, to ask for unanimous consent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I take the opposition House leader's point of order, but the member stood on a point of order, and he did not make it very clear what he was seeking until I said it was not a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I have a request for unanimous consent to move a motion. Agreed? No.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: On September 13, 2012, the Speaker ruled that while a prima facie breach of privilege had been established, he would set aside the matter and ask the three House leaders to take it upon themselves to find a path that can satisfy the request of the estimates committee. The direction was clear. He sought an opportunity for frank communication to settle the matter in a way that satisfied the request of the estimates committee.

The House leaders met on four separate occasions to determine whether a solution could be found. On this side of the House, Speaker, we had high hopes that the parties would ultimately reach a solution that struck a balance between the competing public interests identified in the Speaker's ruling. The government tabled two separate proposals that would have facilitated the public release of the records while accommodating the government's concern about the ongoing commercial negotiations and related proceedings.

Unfortunately, the discussions didn't get off to a good start. The opposition wouldn't attend the meetings that the Speaker had set up last week to broker a solution. I think that's a pretty good indication of how committed they were to the process: not at all. The opposition House leaders were unwilling to consider the government's proposal or engage in any serious discussions. It's extremely disappointing, Speaker, that the opposition decided on Friday to walk away from the negotiations. It's irresponsible and shows that they just don't care about the Speaker's authority or Ontario taxpayers.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: They don't care about the Ontario taxpayers. Instead of trying to use the weekend—

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Speaker: I distinctly heard the member for Mississauga–Cooksville impugning the motives of the opposition, saying that the opposition didn't care about the Speaker's ruling. Speaker, that's offensive, and I would ask that the member withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): On your point of order, I did not hear the member say any such, because the place was very noisy. I've been trying to keep everyone quiet, but—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I finish?

But I will give the member an opportunity. If you did say it, it's really your choice to withdraw.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Mr. Speaker, in the interest of erring on the side of caution, I withdraw.

That said, Speaker, it's extremely disappointing that the opposition decided on Friday to walk away from the negotiations. It's irresponsible and, as I mentioned earlier, it shows that they do not care about the Ontario taxpayer.

Instead of trying to use the weekend to find a solution, they decided to play politics, point fingers and ignore the public interest. Instead of trying to find common ground, as the Speaker requested, they left, and used the time to spin the media with inaccuracies.

I'm disappointed that instead of working together in advancing the interests of Ontarians, we are wasting time over here. I urge this House to get back to work and work in the interests of the Ontarians who elected us here as their representatives to further their interests.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I've risen here in this hallowed chamber a few times now since my election almost a year ago today, and unfortunately, I'm saddened to say that I stand here today to speak to this motion. I think most of us share the sentiment that it is disappointing that we need to take this appropriate measure to restore parliamentary procedure. As members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, it's our responsibility to hold the government of the day to account. That is our democratic duty. I'll be

talking about duty a little more later on, but it's our democratic duty.

I got into politics because I felt that the principles of accountability and transparency in government should reign supreme, and now, I stand here because those very principles are being challenged—principles on which members served, in times gone by, with distinction here at Queen's Park.

Documents have been turned over, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate that they have not been turned over in their entirety. As my honourable colleague from Nipissing pointed out, repeatedly, there are thousands of pages that have been redacted, whited out or are just missing. Listening to the government try to spin this and communicate it in such a fashion, to blame other individuals who don't know how to, perhaps, operate a photocopying machine, I find it quite disheartening that they're trying to, once again, blame others for their actions. It's disappointing.

Do the honourable thing. Do the right thing. Stand up and admit that when you're wrong, you're wrong. That's what the people want to hear. That's what the people of Ontario, the constituents with whom these fine members in government, in the third party and, of course, over here in opposition, expect—and they should come to expect that, Mr. Speaker.

These photocopied documents that have been whited out, that have no shred of correspondence, again as my colleague from Nipissing pointed out—many of our staff and interns stayed up going through these supposed documents, to get to the bottom of this scandal. I find it, again, disheartening to find that the truth is being covered up.

1510

If we could only white out some of our \$411-billion debt; perhaps that's this government's plan for getting Ontario back on track. Let's just white out the debt or pretend it doesn't exist. A lot of their policies leading up to this point would suggest that this might be a part of their grand strategy, Mr. Speaker.

We have already been on record saying we were against the gas plants being built in the first place, and the spin that the government is putting on this is one that they're not taking credit for.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: We've made it very clear, Mr. Speaker. We would not build those gas plants. Our responsibility—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, order, please.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan:—to the people of Ontario is to get to the bottom of this fiasco, right the wrongs and ensure that citizens' hard-earned tax dollars are never again invested into a Liberal seat-saving program. But this begs the fundamental question: How are we supposed to get them their answers when we don't have all—I mean all—of the documents?

The complete absence of correspondence with the previous minister and a very limited amount of correspondence from the ministry itself calls into question whether or not this government had any idea what was going on. We find that this is a pattern developing with this Liberal government. We've seen this with Ornge, Mr. Speaker, and what happens to taxpayers' dollars when there are no controls in place.

These are hard-earned tax dollars. Liberals seem to think that it's their money that they spend frivolously, and here we have citizens across the province of Ontario who are struggling to stay in their homes. And here we are, trying to get to the bottom of this tax fiasco.

I want to talk about two things that seem to be vanishing from politics, Mr. Speaker: Respect and trust. Respect for elected officials of all stripes is at a historical low, and I think one of the key reasons for this is that citizens no longer trust their elected representatives. A sense of cynicism has emerged. You hear voters say this over and over: "Who cares what they say? They'll just break their promises anyway." Voters are not willing to respect people they cannot trust. This sense of apathy is unhealthy in a democratic system. This sense of apathy is why we're seeing declining voter turnout and declining faith in the overall political system.

Some members have discussed the great statesmen of the past. The member from Peterborough eloquently talked about fine members like Premier Bill Davis, a great statesman, a Progressive Conservative, I might add.

I think each member here strives to be a great statesman—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Statesperson.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan:—statesperson; thank you—a statesperson of the future. But people are not going to place their trust and therefore respect in politicians if things do not change; and things have to change, because change is good. This government has proven that change is needed in the province of Ontario.

For nine years, people have seen a government that breaks promise after promise and seems to do so without skipping a beat.

What some of my honourable colleagues on both sides of the House have said is true: Governing is not always a flawless game—agreed. But when mistakes are made, there needs to be not only an acknowledgement of this mistake and a proper apology, but there has to be a clear understanding of why this has happened—why, and to whom was responsible.

Let's not forget, the current Minister of Energy, I believe, is a good man. From what I know—I've spoken to the minister on several occasions—he's a very honourable man of principle who has been thrown under the bus by this Premier and the former minister of the portfolio of energy.

Interjection: Who was that?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I believe it was the Minister of Economic Development.

What led to this error? When you're trying to get to the bottom of something, when you're trying to resolve

an issue, perhaps find compromise—I always instructed my students to ask questions. This is how we learn. Ask the hard questions. Don't settle for mediocrity. Ask the hard questions and don't give up on that. Make sure you get the answers that you require. We haven't seen that, Mr. Speaker. We have not seen the co-operation that's expected from this government on this motion—"release all the documents." "All," by definition—

Interjection: Hold the whitout.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It might be whited out in the Oxford dictionary; I'm not sure. But "all the documents" implies each and every one in its entirety. We haven't seen this.

Most importantly, how do we avoid making the same mistake twice? Well, Mr. Speaker—

Interjection: Get rid of the Liberals.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: That would be a good choice.

We've seen time and time again—I alluded earlier to the fact that this current government, under Mr. McGuinty, the Premier of this province, has not been steadfast in maintaining promises to the people and delivering on those promises. This type of activity is going to continue until the people of Ontario decide—and the recent poll that just came out would indicate that our Liberal colleagues are in some hot water. If there was an election held today, they would finish in third place—

Interjections: Fourth.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Fourth.

This government has accused the opposition of holding up important legislative business and stalling the Legislature from getting things done. This accusation disturbs me. It is their decision-making that has raised serious questions that require serious answers. Rather than hand over all of the documents, they chose to provide us with only part of the information. This only makes us wonder what else they can possibly be hiding.

1520

Mr. Speaker, when I taught Shakespeare—and one thing that I have learned in studying Shakespeare is that we humans can only base our actions on information that we get; then we can move forward based on the knowledge that we acquire. Well, in this situation, we don't have the information. We don't have that knowledge to make reference, to ask questions. Based on that lack of knowledge, we, like the rest of the citizens of this great province, are left in the dark, not knowing exactly how much this fiasco is costing the taxpayers.

I'd like to offer a quote from Richard Armour. He said, "Politics, it seems to me, for years, or all too long, has been concerned with right or left instead of right or wrong." While this is particularly true this week, Mr. Speaker, over the past few days, particularly yesterday and this morning, our party has been accused of playing petty partisan politics. I'm confused. Since when is holding this government to account not the duty of the opposition? And since when is hundreds of millions of dollars "petty"?

This is not about partisanship, Mr. Speaker. This is about the fact that it is morally wrong to mislead the people of Ontario. This morning—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw that statement.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Withdraw. I will not mislead any further.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I caution the member: Withdraw, and we let it sit at that, please. Withdraw?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Withdraw.

This morning, one member of the government referred to this motion as frivolous. So now it's frivolous to simply question whether the cost of this cancellation is \$40 million, \$190 million, \$450 million, \$640 million, or perhaps we'd like to start throwing numbers closer to a billion around.

And is it frivolous to ask who is making these decisions? I've heard members of the government say that Mr. Bentley has not done any wrong. I'm not judging, but given the information that we have, it would indicate to us that we can't base our accusations, our decisions, on fact, on truth. The fine people of Northumberland—Quinte West I have the privilege of serving deserve better. The people of Ontario deserve better. Indeed, this hallowed chamber deserves better.

Another member of the government said, "We are saying we made a decision around these gas plants that, in retrospect, we would not make today, so we take responsibility for that." I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, but simply stating that responsibility has been taken without quite literally providing the documents to back it up is just rhetoric. The people of Ontario have learned the hard way over the last nine years that this government's promises cannot be relied on.

What bothers me is the suggestion by this government that opposition members are on a witch hunt. We've been accused of personally attacking the Minister of Energy. Let me be clear: The minister's great personal integrity is not the issue here. The issue is the lack of transparency and accountability by this government in disclosing the actual costs of these plant relocations. This issue stems from this government's inability to adjust to its minority status in the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I join the debate with much pleasure. It's always a pleasure to walk into this particular place here, which we call home, or the chamber of the people, and debate various issues with different flair.

One thing is for sure, and I think every member may share in that: It doesn't matter what flair the debate may apply on a daily basis; it is one of those very particularly interesting things that we come to this place to deliver our best.

This issue that we are debating today is important—more, perhaps, than others that at different times we debate in this House. But without taking any value from other issues, everything that we debate in this House we do on behalf of the people that we represent, and we serve our constituents.

I have to say that, speaking on this particular topic, I'm not very much enamoured, if you will, to speak on an issue that gives me a bit of difficulty, given the issue itself. I really don't know if I should apply more time to the content of the motion or the intent contained within the motion.

The fact is that we are trying to perhaps shoot the messenger here. I have to say, before I get on with my remarks and then forget the most important thing, I acknowledge that the person that has done so much, not only as Minister of Energy but other ministries; within his own community; within his own professional field; is a person of impeccable qualities, of the highest integrity; is a distinguished professional in his own field, the legal field; is a dedicated public servant, having served as minister of other ministries and presently as Minister of Energy; and is a respected member of the peers in this House and the people in his own community. I speak of member Mr. Bentley, the Minister of Energy.

What takes us here today? What brings us into this House to debate this particular issue? Let me read it for the benefit of the people watching. They may say, "What the heck is going on in the House? We have no idea what they are talking about." I have to say that perhaps—I say "perhaps"—the public is not fully aware, doesn't have a full acknowledgement, of what we are debating in the House today.

Let me say that perhaps later on—maybe in several days, once we debate this issue further, once we get some more press releases in the news media and stuff like that—people will come to see what we are really discussing, and then they may start to throw their arms around and say, "What the heck is going on? Let's get some common sense in that House and let's get on with the business that should be done in this place here."

What has brought us to debate this particular issue in the House today? It is a motion brought by the member from Cambridge, Mr. Leone, with a further amendment to the motion itself. The motion asks "that this House directs the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to table immediately with the Clerk of the House all remaining documents ordered by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012." And then there is an amendment: "That the committee shall be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair and shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012." Then there is another amendment by Mr. Leone himself: "That the words 'November 19, 2012' be deleted and the following added: 'November 23 ...' on Friday. Then there is another amendment to the amendment that comes from the member from Toronto-Danforth, Mr. Tabuns: "That the words 'November 23, 2012' be removed and the following be added: 'November 26, 2012.'"

1530

Democracy is a wonderful thing, it really is, because now what happens? Under our democratic system, we are debating the amendment to the amendment, and then, who knows? We may decide that everyone wants to

debate the amendment, and when that is over, everybody wants to debate the motion, and then, given our democratic freedom of this assembly, we may have some other motion and then debate some other motion on the same issue all over again. I have to say, Speaker, that someone said that democracy works when the governing majority gives the minority an opportunity to be heard. This is what's happening in the House today: The minority is having its day. We are hearing them; the public is hearing them.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sergio, you're the minority.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I appreciate that.

The fact is that the opposition is fulfilling their own responsibility, as they should. But the fact is that as we are debating this issue, which they brought to the floor of the House, because they introduced the motion—with all due respect, Speaker, you have directed the Minister of Energy to provide all documentation, release all documentation, with respect to the issue to this House. Well, we now have that. The opposition has all the documentation that they were requesting. So what is it? Are they happy with it or are they unhappy? I have to say they are unhappy; otherwise, we wouldn't be here discussing this issue today, because if they were happy, they would have said, "Okay, we got it, so let's get on to discuss other business, the important business, of the House, the business of the people of Ontario."

Having provided all the documentation—the minister, having heard the direction from you, Speaker, and having delivered some 36,000 pages—does it mean that when the opposition says, "Uh-uh, this is not all, this is not true," are we saying that the minister, then—it's not delivering according to your direction, Speaker? I think we should pay some attention to that, because if the minister is not acting according to your direction, then something is very wrong here. It means somebody is not telling the truth. And when somebody's not telling the truth, we know what the other option is.

We heard many times that this issue is nothing more than a fiasco. In my other language, a fiasco is a nice round bottle of wine dressed on the outside by straw, but the wine inside is very good. I really don't know how "fiasco" got to acquire this particular taste, because that particular wine in that fiasco happens to be really, really good wine.

But let's get back to the issue. We are not the only ones who said we should be opposed to these particular stations—by the way, they are only two out of 17 stations in Ontario. We had the opposition, both the Conservatives and NDP, agreeing with us. They agreed, Speaker. I'm not saying that; we have something on record here. For example, on June 1, 2010, from the Hansard, Mr. Chudleigh said, "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them."

The Globe and Mail, on September 25, 2011, Mr. Hudak: "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga," and we will continue to oppose that.

Early this morning here, the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington made a particular

quote. He said, "The McGuinty government is not the first and not the last government"—meaning making a blunder, if you will, or making an inaccurate decision or making a mistake or whatever you want to call it. There's so much truth in that. In the past, present or future, there will always be a government that is going to make a mistake, big or small or medium, but always at some cost. If we were to think otherwise, then I think we better rethink our position in this House, because we don't belong on this planet, because to see a government that would be perfect is impossible.

Having said that, let me say this: No one would like to see taxpayers' money—if you can call it, let's say, wasted, to give it a nice resonance—wasted. But if we look at the past, what happened? To give you some other ideas of how governments work, I've been here a few years and I've seen what happens during my stay in this House. I was part of the opposition when—actually, it was before my time; I was still a councillor in the city of North York when we wanted to build the subway extension to York University. That was 20 years ago. I don't have to tell you—

Interjection.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Not that far off—the cost of those 20 years of delays and misconceptions.

I don't have to tell you that, I believe it was 1991, or 1992 maybe, when Mr. Harris was debating the subway along Eglinton Avenue. The mayor at the time, my friend Mayor Lastman, said: "No, no. I want the subway up on Sheppard Avenue." A political decision was made to mothball the Eglinton subway.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That was 1996.

Mr. Mario Sergio: In 1996—thank you. That's quite a few years ago. Did anybody ever ask the cost of mothballing the Eglinton—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order: The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Point of order: For five weeks now, the Liberal House leader has refused to re-strike the standing committees of the Legislature. I wish to seek unanimous consent in order to re-strike the investigation into the Liberal scandal into Ornge. I'm looking for unanimous consent to reconstitute all of the standing committees immediately with their existing committee structure as they existed on September 9, 2012, and that the said committees be reconstituted until at least August 31, 2013.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member, because this is about the third or fourth time a similar motion has been moved, that—

Interjection: There's nothing in the standing orders—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will deal with it. Can you let me finish? I also realize it's coming from the same party at all times. I will take this one, but the next one, I'd ask that the House leaders at least consult each other.

I have a request for unanimous consent. Agreed? I heard a no.

The member for York West.

1540

Mr. John O'Toole: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Hold the clock. The member for Durham, on a point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: How come the clock is stopped, when points of order are called, only when our side is losing time—I do question that. Yesterday, I lost almost three minutes because the Speaker stood while the clock ran. I lost the time to make my points about this condition that we're dealing with, of contempt. I feel offended by it, and it's not justifiable. Please explain that to me: why you're stopping the clock to save them the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to the member that I've been consistent all day.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to challenge you in any way, but in the standing orders, a point of order is always in order; it must be taken. If it's a repetitive one, it really doesn't matter. A point of order is in order. A member is allowed to move it, and I would ask you to consult with the table next time, because he would be in order to do so.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I did take his request. I'm just saying it has been the fourth time. I'm just asking the House, so that at least we could carry on our business.

The member for York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker. This is part and parcel of our democratic system, as well, and I can appreciate that.

Let me go back to what I was saying before. I want to take the members of the House back to the Mike Harris years, when the Eglinton line was mothballed. I have no idea how many millions were spent to dig out Eglinton Avenue, just to abandon it.

Everybody remembers what happened to the Allen expressway. What happened? Another political decision was made to stop it at Eglinton Avenue. I don't have to tell you, Speaker, how many years ago that took place. Thousands of cars, on a daily basis, now come to a very sudden end at Eglinton Avenue, and no one has bothered to check the cost of this particular decision made many, many years ago.

I think the biggest blunder, if we want to really attach some—

Interjection: eHealth?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Well, that's one of those.

Let me say, the 407—that was not a sale, but it was gifted away to a Spaniard consortium, at the expense of every Ontarian. Do we know, did anybody ever ask how much that cost and is still costing and will cost the taxpayers of Ontario? My grandchildren's grandchildren's grandchildren and theirs and ours and Ontarians all will be paying for that misstep that was selling the 407—millions and millions of dollars.

You know, Speaker, the member was right: It's not the first, and it's not going to be the last. We will have many

more. But the fact is that we are dealing with the issue today, and I hope that we deal with it in a very non-partisan way, according to the rights of the House here, because in the end, we all have to respond to the people out there who put us here in the first place.

As much as the opposition has the right to bring issues to this House, there is a particular point when those very same taxpayers will say, "Enough is enough. Let's concentrate on our daily lives, our daily living. Let's concentrate on jobs, on education, on health care, on providing the best that we can for the people of Ontario." These are the things that I think we should be attaching more particular interest to than an issue that I have to say has become maybe vindictive in some ways—and I'm not referring to any member who has gotten vindictive modes versus any other. I think it's the beast that we deal with on a daily basis in this House.

Given that, let me bring this scenario on the floor of the House. Since the opposition have agreed publicly that they would have done the same thing—opposing the two stations—

Interjection: Except it would have cost more.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Well, maybe it would have cost more, maybe less. Who knows?

But let's play the scenario that if we were to go ahead and build both stations, disregarding the will of the local people and the local elected officials there, including the mayor. Speaker, I wonder, a few years down the road when maybe another government would be in place, what they would have done. Would they have closed those two stations and said, "We promised back in 2011 or 2012 that we would cancel them, that we would not go along"? Imagine what would be the damage in those days.

I can fathom, Speaker. First of all would be the consequence that someone would have to pay, and who would do that? The particular government that would be in place at the time. And who would suffer the consequences? The people of Ontario. If it costs \$190 million today, Speaker, imagine how many billions it would cost when you have to completely close—shut down—an operating facility.

On top of that, there is the fact that if we had gone ahead and built the two stations—I haven't heard in this House, and I have to say I have heard good comments on both sides of the House—what would have been the consequences, maybe health-wise, air pollution, perhaps some other catastrophe? Have we ever given any consideration to that, to those two communities there? What would have happened? Maybe unknowingly, while this hurts, it's a good thing to happen.

I think we should dwell on this particular issue, because I don't think anyone considering running and forming a government, let's say, maybe three, four, five or 10 years down the road would come back and say, "Ten years ago, we decided to cancel it." How could they do that, Speaker? At what cost? First of all, we're talking about replacing energy that we all need. We do hope our economy will grow, that Ontario will grow and we'll need more energy on a daily basis. Or are we going to

revert, go back and buy from Michigan—from the States—or from Manitoba?

I remember when we had to buy power in US dollars from the States because nothing was done. I would say to the members of the House: Look what we have accomplished in the past eight or nine years, even with respect to energy. I would say, take that into consideration when we continue deliberation of this particular issue. I admire the opposition for being steadfast and saying, "We are the opposition. We want to look into it. We want to see. We want to make sure." I say, go ahead and do it; it's your responsibility. But once you look into it, then I think it's time to say, "We are satisfied," or, "We take further issues and further action."

But for this time, I have to say that this is what's in front of us, and we have delivered—the minister has delivered—what they were looking for. I think they should be looking at everything they got. I don't think they got through 36,000 pages—hits or whatever you want to call it. Speaker, the fact is, we delivered to them on your direction, on behalf of the people of Ontario, and I hope we can move on on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I stand before you today in this revered Legislature to speak to the motion put forward by my colleague from Cambridge. The motion, with its amendments, deals with the reluctance of the Minister of Energy to release the paperwork regarding the cancelled power plant contracts in Mississauga and Oakville. In response to a point of privilege made by the member from Cambridge on August 27, the Speaker ruled on September 13 that a *prima facie* breach of members' privilege has been established, after he investigated the reluctance of the minister to release these documents to the members of this House.

The motion by the member from Cambridge is in response to the Speaker's ruling of September 13, and charges that this Liberal minister is in contempt of this House. This unprecedented matter in the modern era has seized the agenda of this House. Mr. Speaker, as you know, the decision to cancel the power plant project in Mississauga was made a year ago, in the last two weeks of the provincial election. The decision was made by an unnamed political staffer from the Liberal campaign in Mississauga; so said the finance minister at the estimates committee. This decision was purely political, and this government did it to save Liberal seats. It worked. The Liberals won the local seats they wanted to keep by making this decision. They make no excuses about it. They admit it.

1550

The decision to cancel the power plant project in Oakville was made in October 2010, during the last month of the municipal election. No doubt, Liberal-friendly candidates were running for city council and school board trustee positions. The gas-fired power plant would have been a top issue for those candidates. I can see that the Oakville decision was to help those Liberal-minded candidates get elected. A sitting government

always likes to have friends it can count on at the municipal level. Again, this was part of their strategy to interfere in the electoral process to their advantage, using taxpayers' dollars.

Unabashedly emboldened by their perceived cleverness, the Liberals have crossed the line one too many times. This takes the cake. Not only is it evidence of corrupt behaviour, but it is a sad testament to what the Liberals are: bereft of all ethics—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Carry on.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: At the time of the two power plant project contracts and cancellations, the Liberals had a majority government. The decision to sign these contracts was wrong in the first place. The locations were bad to begin with. The rash, simple-minded decision to cancel these contracts was made by a rotting government after years of near absolute power in the Legislature. There have been no real checks or balances for years.

This minority government situation we find ourselves in now is bringing more transparency. Before the election last October, the government could make a decision unilaterally. Now they can't, and we, Her Majesty's loyal opposition, have tools at our disposal to hold the government to account. The people of Ontario decided to withhold a third majority from this government. They stopped the unfettered reign of the Premier and his team, and it's a good thing they did.

This situation brings to mind the 19th-century historian and moralist John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton, the first Baron Acton, who studied governments through the ages. He commented on how power, left unchecked, leads to corruption. The thought processes of omnipotent governors in power for too long become compromised and reprogrammed, recalibrated towards self-interest and self-preservation. A sense of self-entitlement pervades. His famous saying describes this government perfectly, in my opinion. He said, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Hypothetically speaking, how does a corrupt government act? It could start with compromising the electoral process by using public funds for political gain. Then it could try to hide evidence of any self-serving, costly or biased decision-making. If its opposition finds proof of evidence, a corrupt government withholds that evidence from an investigating legislative committee. Further, they would withhold this embarrassing information, the paper trail of the deals, until after a doubleheader by-election. Then, only after the Speaker of the House demands the evidence and threatens contempt charges, a corrupt, compromised government would release the documents of evidence only in part, not in whole.

It would be like pulling teeth to try to work with such a government and, more tragically, it would be very, very expensive for the taxpayer.

So how much money—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

I would warn the member, because I asked you to withdraw the previous statement, that you're attempting to do the same—slightly indirectly. So I warn you, as you carry on.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

How much money is the current Liberal government in the hole on these two deals? How much of Ontarians' hard-earned cash has this government wasted this time? How many good programs will the government have to forgo because of this waste? It may end up to be billions. But the current price tag for this debacle is \$645 million: \$195 million on the Mississauga plant and \$450 million on the Oakville plant. The Liberals wasted—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Durham, if you're not going to keep order and you're not in your seat, that's a double—so I'd ask you to come to order first, and if you want to heckle, you'll have to sit in your own seat.

Carry on.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: The Liberals wasted at least \$645 million on this seat-saving scandal; 4% of our deficit this year is paying these costs.

I suggest that the Liberal Party should pay for these politically motivated decisions. The Mississauga decision was even made by a political campaign staff member, not the minister, but it is the minister's responsibility. This government, and more specifically the government's political party, needs to take responsibility for their actions and accept that this decision was not made in the interests of Ontarians; that people of Ontario did not receive a benefit; the Ontario Liberal Party did; and so the people should not pay. Literally, paying the price for this ill-advised decision would be the only way to make it right; \$645 million needs to be given back to the people of Ontario. Such costs should not be borne by the taxpayer.

These are the costs of Liberal election campaign tactics that go too far and cost too much. The cost consists of relocating the plants after substantial construction had occurred, the geographic realities of the new sites, as well as contractual penalties, and this is only what we know at this moment. We're still going through the computer scans of 36,000 pages that comprise the file on these two cancelled contracts. Unfortunately, the package of information the Liberal House leader dropped in our mailbox at lunchtime on Monday contains a lot of paper but not much ink; 36,000 pages of severely questionable material was submitted by the government House leader. It is obvious the file is incomplete.

Troubling as it is that the government would try yet another stall tactic for us to get through, worse is the insult to the people of Ontario. The government House leader knew what he was doing when he sent those partial documents—10% of the pages are blank, redacted. Letters or presentations that were pertinent to our review are missing; only their cover letters are included. There are partial emails from senior bureaucrats, but sensitive

material has been blanked out. The package doesn't even contain any correspondence by the Minister of Energy when he was in the driver's seat on this deal—no emails, no notes from the minister, not even any correspondence to or from the Premier. I am bewildered by this.

After stonewalling us at committee since May 16 and after the Speaker's ruling of September 13, which demanded that all pertinent documents be released to the House by September 24, this Minister of Energy is still playing games. He needed to fully comply with the Speaker's request; he did not. In my opinion, the minister is in contempt of this House, in contempt of the people of Ontario and in contempt of our parliamentary democracy.

This minister should have resigned his position to clear the air on this issue; he did not. Lack of judgment and an interest in the Premier's job prevented him from making that admirable choice. The Premier has allowed this to go on, and still today he is absent on the issue.

1600

Our democratic tradition is the basis of our society. Electing honest representatives to vote on our behalf has long been ingrained in us. It is second nature for us to go to the polls and hope the system will work the way it should, as a co-operative, consultative, honest decision-making human machine built on trust and acting on our behalf. Goal number one is to protect the public trust. Sadly, our democratic machine has broken down on Ontarians. The public chooses their elected representatives for their honesty, trustworthy compassion and willingness to devote themselves to public service. In contrast, the public has long been hoodwinked into believing a façade by the Premier and his pals.

The truth becomes clear if one scratches the surface. Willfully, the Liberals have smashed the public trust again and again and again. Members of the public and members of this House deserve better. For democracy to work, transparency is key. By its actions, this government does not believe that transparency is a virtue. It does not believe that oversight and accountability are cornerstones of good government. For them, truth is a dirty word. Spin is their first thought, obfuscation comes second and respect for taxpayers comes last, just below prudent financial management.

The government must comply with the requests of committees of the Legislature in a timely manner. They do not have the luxury or discretion to ignore. Questions posed need to be answered. Transparency of decision-making is critical to the essence of government, because that is what MPPs are hired to do: make sound decisions out in the open on behalf of the public.

The endeavours of the government are funded by taxpayers. If the public can't watch how their money is being spent, and if the public can't scrutinize actions—past, present, and future—taken by their government, then it is not a functioning democracy. This government is operating like a banana republic, expecting to answer to no one.

Why isn't this government answering our questions? Why aren't they forthcoming with all the documents? What are they hiding? What is on those thousands of

redacted pages: evidence of compromised decision-making that exposes more truth, evidence of more money thrown at voters to sway opinion? The people want to know. Ontarians want us to hold this government to account. Ontarians want us to follow the money—their money—and ensure that the integrity of this House is upheld. The people want us to get to the bottom of this pool of contempt. Poor judgment does not excuse the disrespect this minister has shown this House.

Tuesday afternoon, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing stood in her place, pointed across at us and accused us of manufactured discontent. She accused us, the official opposition, of being disingenuous. Listen, this mess is not our fault. We didn't cancel contracts with total disregard for the public purse in the middle of an economic recession. The way she sees it, and no doubt the way her government colleagues see it, she thinks we're making this an issue that is larger than it really is. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing feels that this breach of members' privileges is a non-issue.

I guess that tells us that she would have done the same if she was the Minister of Energy. She supports her government's decision to keep taxpayers in the dark. By her comments, it is clear that she supports the hiding of truth from the opposition and the public. To her, saving a handful of Liberal seats in the last election is worth \$645 million of taxpayer money. It appears that the minister subscribes to the notion that people like to be bribed with their own money.

Manufactured discontent, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing says. Horse feathers, I say. Manufactured consent is more like it. They would not have cancelled or relocated those power plant deals if they did not have a political reason to do so: to buy votes, to buy the consent of the voter to give the Liberals four more seats toward majority rule. Manufactured consent is what we're really dealing with. Part of the government's manufacturing process has led us to this week's debate. This government's own actions have led us to this point of contempt, not the official opposition. We don't need to look for ways to be discontented with this government. They have given us myriad reasons to be discontented over the years. In the least, they are the author of any manufactured discontent present today. Even after admitting that clearly this is a decision that they would not make today, this minister points the finger at us. It seems that the only reason the government wouldn't make the decision again is that they got caught in the act. Clearly, if they can hide it, they will hide it.

This makes me question all the other government information on all the other scandals. The Ornge scandal is another example of questionable information. How much other skulduggery has gone on behind closed doors? We just don't know what we don't know. This beleaguered government plays fast and loose with the people's trust and money. We know that. The Premier has got us into a \$260-billion debt and a \$15-billion deficit with his audacious errors in judgment. The \$645 million from this scandal is the latest cherry on top. The province of Ontario has never been so in the hole.

The case for ministerial contempt is clear. We need to send this serious issue to committee for proper due diligence.

This motion, as amended, would set up the finance committee of the Legislature that the Liberals are refusing to set up, which is another example of their contempt of Parliament. The finance committee is the right place for members to question the government on this issue. The committee will confirm whether contempt of the Legislature did occur. The committee will decide on the appropriate sanctions. After their work is done, the committee will report back to the Legislature. If the Legislature does not swiftly denounce the true ministerial contempt, we will be plagued by this precedent. If we don't nip this in the bud, this and any future government will be able to use this to justify similar actions.

We must protect the spirit of openness, accountability, and transparency upon which our democratic institutions are founded. It is imperative that we all vote in favour of this motion. If this motion fails, we will not be able to find out the whole story. We need to hold this government to full account.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci, monsieur le Président. Je veux vous dire que mardi dernier, le 25 septembre, la journée de la francophonie, était une journée très sombre pour moi. Je devais me lever ici dans la Chambre pour parler aux Franco-Ontariens et leur dire comment ce gouvernement-là les appuie et quel beau travail ils font pour faire rayonner la francophonie en Ontario. Que ce soit nos professeurs, les gens dans notre système de santé ou les citoyens en général, les francophones sont ici depuis 400 ans, et on va célébrer très bientôt le 400^e anniversaire de l'arrivée de Champlain. Mais on n'a pas pu célébrer ensemble parce qu'on a commencé ce débat. On ne sait pas où est-ce que ça va nous mener. On entend l'opposition parler de leurs préoccupations. On ne sait pas combien de temps ça va durer; ça va peut-être aller jusqu'à Noël. J'espère un jour pouvoir me lever en Chambre et parler aux Franco-Ontariens du 25 septembre, la journée des Franco-Ontariens que ce gouvernement ici a adoptée. On n'a pas pu leur en parler. J'espère que les gens de l'opposition étaient prêts à leur parler aussi.

Je veux vous dire aussi pourquoi je suis venue en politique. Je suis venue en politique parce que je voulais faire une différence, parce que j'ai été élevée avec des parents qui me disaient toujours qu'on doit remettre à la communauté ce qu'on a reçu de la communauté. J'étais une personne qui a été très chanceuse. J'ai eu des parents extraordinaires. J'ai été élevée dans un petit village, une communauté tricotée très serrée, et c'est en leur nom et avec leur aide que je me suis rendue où je me suis rendue aujourd'hui.

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Alors, je suis venue en politique non pas pour débattre ce qu'on débat aujourd'hui, mais je suis venue en politique pour aider les citoyens de l'Ontario, les citoyens

d'Ottawa—Vanier—les aider, les écouter, répondre à leurs préoccupations. C'est pour ça que cette semaine on devait passer—bon, que ce soit la troisième lecture du bill sur le crédit d'impôt pour rénover les maisons pour aider nos personnes âgées ou le Bill 50, l'amendement à la Loi sur les ambulances, parce qu'on veut s'assurer que les citoyens de l'Ontario puissent avoir un système d'ambulances lorsqu'ils en ont besoin, un système efficace, un système qui sera là quand on en aura besoin ou d'autres projets de loi qui devaient être adoptés ou qui devaient passer en deuxième ou en troisième lecture. Alors, on n'a pas pu avancer dans notre agenda politique, mais on doit aujourd'hui défendre ce que le gouvernement a fait quand on a annulé le projet du plant d'électricité de Mississauga et de celui Oakville.

Mais je suis ici aussi premièrement pour parler en faveur et défendre la personne qui est au banc des accusés aujourd'hui, qui est notre ministre de l'Énergie, Chris Bentley.

This Minister of Energy, Chris Bentley, is a man of integrity. I would like to take this opportunity to explain why I and many members in this House feel that way. First, let's start from the beginning. The member for London West received a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Western Ontario and obtained a law degree from the University of Toronto. Two years later, he obtained a master's degree from Cambridge University in England. He is a lawyer who practised criminal and labour law for almost 25 years. He's a man of integrity. For 10 of those years, he also taught part-time at the University of Western Ontario law school, where he helped to establish the law school career office.

As Minister of Energy, he has put public interest first as the deal reached clearly shows. Speaker, it's a sad day when members resort to disgusting personal attacks like this. Ontarians deserve better. I will proudly stand on this side of the House any day of the week and support the principled actions of this minister.

La communauté francophone connaît très bien ce ministre. D'ailleurs, lors de l'assemblée générale des Franco-Ontariens il y a une semaine passée, il m'a remplacée à London pour parler, dans la langue de Molière, de l'apport des francophones, répondre à leurs questions et les remercier. Aujourd'hui, il est au banc des accusés par l'opposition. À la place de discuter du fait qu'on a annulé ces deux plants-là, on fait des attaques personnelles. Je ne suis pas venue ici à Queen's Park pour me prêter à ces jeux dont je suis tout à fait contre. Si on veut débattre aujourd'hui ce qui a été fait, qu'on débattre la cancellation de ces deux plants-là, et qu'on n'attaque pas un homme d'une grande intégrité.

D'ailleurs, j'ai rencontré récemment des gens, autant du côté juridique que la communauté des juges, et ils étaient très déçus de voir ce qui se passait ici aujourd'hui.

On sait que le ministre de l'Énergie a été aussi le procureur général et il a, pendant quatre ans, exercé ce rôle-là avec intégrité et respect. Je peux parler au nom de toute la communauté juridique ici en Ontario et ailleurs de l'apport du ministre Bentley lorsqu'il était procureur général.

Alors, on a eu ici en Chambre des gens, des politiciens—que ce soit du côté des néo-démocrates ou du côté des conservateurs, on a eu des politiciens exemplaires. Je vous dirais, monsieur le Président, après 21 ans en politique, que sauf une exception, j'ai toujours vu des gens qui étaient en politique pour les bonnes raisons, et je n'accepte pas aujourd'hui voir ces nouveaux députés, qui viennent avec un texte préparé par leur parti, dénigrer le rôle de politicien. Je n'accepte pas ça. Ça fait 21 ans que je suis en politique. Ça fait 21 ans que je travaille très fort pour mes commettants. Ça fait 20 ans que je côtoie des politiciens extraordinaires. Et je n'accepte pas qu'aujourd'hui on vient descendre un de nos collègues qui a une personnalité extraordinaire et une intégrité sans pareil.

Je vous nomme des gens qui ont été ici en Chambre et qui ont—

Mr. John O'Toole: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, the minister is suggesting that we have been talking against the Minister of Energy's personal professionalism. We have not, and I would ask her to withdraw that. She's trying to establish that somehow we're impugning him at a personal level. We're accusing him of wasting \$650 million of taxpayers' money: nothing more, nothing less. This is about transparency and accountability, and I will not accept it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to the member, thank you for your point of order. I've been listening carefully myself, and I'm sorry; I disagree with you because it's been carrying on this way on both sides all day.

Minister?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président. Comme je vous disais, on a eu ici dans cette Chambre des membres extraordinaires.

Je vous nomme Bob Welch, un ministre conservateur qui a laissé sa marque ici.

Je vous rappelle aussi Bob Nixon, qui a laissé des marques extraordinaires, qui a été un politicien sans pareil ici.

Je vous rappelle Stephen Lewis. J'ai eu toujours un plaisir à écouter Stephen Lewis. Si vous voulez parler de quelqu'un qui était un orateur extraordinaire et qui l'est encore, c'est Stephen Lewis.

Je veux aussi vous parler de Bill Davis, qui était un premier ministre extraordinaire.

Je veux vous parler de Roy McMurtry, qui nous rend encore des services extraordinaires et qui a été un très grand juriste.

Je veux vous parler de Sean Conway. Si vous voulez entendre une belle présentation, une belle prestation dans cette Chambre—les gens ont invité les amis à venir dans les galeries lorsque Sean Conway parlait.

Je veux vous parler aussi d'Ian Scott, qui a été un procureur général avec une intégrité, avec une sérénité, qui était l'ami d'à peu près tout le monde. On ne lui connaissait pas d'ennemi.

Je veux vous parler aussi de Jim Renwick, qui a aussi passé dans cette Chambre et qui a laissé des marques indélébiles.

Alors, moi, je respecte tous mes collègues dans cette Chambre, et je veux aussi qu'on respecte mon collègue le ministre de l'Énergie.

Pourquoi est-ce qu'on a annulé ces deux plants d'électricité?

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As I am sure the members of this House are aware, the OPA contracted to have the Oakville facility built to meet the energy demands of the area at the time. The Ontario Power Authority contracted with TransCanada Energy Ltd. in September 2009 to design, build and operate, over a 20-year term, a 900-megawatt natural-gas-fired electricity generating station in Oakville.

In October 2010—not in October 2011—the government determined that the project would not proceed. It did so for two reasons: clear evidence that it no longer required a facility in Oakville to meet energy demands, and a response to the significant concerns voiced by the community and local elected officials, including Mayor Burton, MPP Kevin Flynn and, yes, MPP Ted Chudleigh.

The government's decision was not only supported by the local community; it was supported by Tim Hudak—I'm sorry—supported by the Leader of the Opposition, of the Ontario PCs.

Hansard, June 1, 2010: Mr. Chudleigh said, "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them." That's what Mr. Chudleigh said.

In the Globe and Mail, on September 25, 2011, the Leader of the Opposition said, "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga."

While no formal litigation resulted from the government's decision, the government and TransCanada had been engaged in formal arbitration and confidential settlement discussions until a resolution was successfully reached on September 24, 2012.

In April 2005, the Ontario Power Authority contracted with Greenfield South Power Corp. to develop and operate a 300-megawatt natural-gas-fired electricity generating station in Mississauga.

Over the course of the next number of years, particularly as construction got under way at the facility, community concerns were brought to the attention of the government and all of the political parties—including the fall 2011 general election campaign. What happened then? During the campaign, the Ontario Liberal Party made the commitment, in response to mounting community concern, that if re-elected, the government would relocate the Mississauga facility to another location.

The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party and the Ontario New Democratic Party made the same commitment during the course of the campaign. And in the Globe and Mail, September 25, 2011, the leader of the PC Party said, "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga."

Shortly after being re-elected, our government announced its intention to relocate the Mississauga facility.

In this case, there was some formal litigation under way, as well as confidential settlement discussions in relation to the cancellation of this project, until a resolution was successfully reached on July 10, 2012. After some long and hard negotiations, the OPA and the proponent reached a deal to relocate the 300-megawatt natural gas plant on part of Ontario Power Generation's Lambton generating station site.

The new site will take advantage of existing transmission and other infrastructure as well as the expertise of local workers. The construction of the plant is expected to provide up to 200 jobs over the next two years. I'm sure that the MPP representing Lambton is very happy to see these jobs, and I'm also sure that the MPP representing Sarnia—we're closing the jail in Sarnia, so there will be job creation in Sarnia.

Over the course of the past several weeks, the official opposition and the third party have attempted to create a myth that the Minister of Energy wilfully attempted to hide or conceal these documents from the Legislature. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Let's look at the facts. Between May 9 and July 11, the Minister of Energy appeared before the Standing Committee on Estimates for the purpose of answering questions regarding the 2012-13 estimates of the Ministry of Energy. While the minister answered questions relating to a number of issues, the committee members from the official opposition spent considerable time asking the minister questions relating to the two gas plants which were to have been built in Oakville and Mississauga, respectively.

While before the committee, the Minister of Energy was placed in a difficult situation. He was repeatedly asked to answer questions relating to the Oakville and Mississauga facilities. The overwhelming majority of the questions related specifically to the ongoing, outstanding legal proceedings and confidential negotiations.

When you are negotiating, you're negotiating behind closed doors; you don't tell the opposition what you want to settle for. So it's nonsense to say that the Minister of Energy wanted to hide documents from the opposition.

Actually, last Monday we sent 36,000 pages of documents—so they have it; they can look at it. I don't think that they're looking at it; it's their aides in the back who are looking at these documents, and they are told by their aides that there's something missing. I don't think so.

On this side of the House, when we make a wrong decision, we're not afraid to step back and say, "We're listening to Ontarians, so we're going to take a step back."

When the opposition party under Mike Harris made the decision to close the Montfort Hospital and there was criticism from the citizens, I would have liked them to be like these people that are Bill Davis, John Roberts and all these people. I would have liked their leader at the time to take a step back and say, "We made a mistake."

No; Franco-Ontarians, the francophones from Ottawa and some anglophones, too, pooled their money together,

and they had to go court and to the appeals court. I'm told also that this government, when they were in power, wanted to go to the Supreme Court—even if they lost—all the way.

When you make a mistake, you should be big enough and tall enough to say, "I've made a mistake."

I'm coming back to my dear friend the Minister of Energy. Mr. Speaker, there are two types of people in the world: There are those who make noise and there are those who make a difference. I'll say to you that the former Attorney General, the Minister of Energy, is in this second category; he's one who is making a difference.

I thank you very much to give me the opportunity to speak today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm privileged to rise today to speak to the motion of contempt on the production of documents that are placed before us as members of this House.

As all members of all sides of the House are aware, this is a very important matter. During this debate, I've heard a number of the members of the government benches state publicly that they think this debate is a poor use of time, or that the Minister of Energy is being pilloried or attacked personally. Nothing could be further from the truth.

They believe that the citizens of Ontario aren't watching at home or following the media reports and generally don't care. But I think they are underestimating the people of Ontario, who, above all, expect those who represent them in Ontario's Legislature to be open, honest and working in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

1630

For the record, the people in Sarnia-Lambton are watching, and they do care. They care and they have a lot of questions. Right now, the people in Sarnia-Lambton are wondering, "When will we hear from the Premier on this issue and in this debate?" He has said that all decisions ultimately end with him: "The buck stops here." So we are awaiting his standing in this chamber to clear the air.

The people in Sarnia-Lambton are wondering, "When are we going to hear from the Minister of Finance?" His job is to be the steward of the finances of the province, but he seems to be absent without leave while hundreds of millions of dollars have been squandered in this energy deal.

I can't believe that the Liberal campaign team during the last election would have dreamt of doing anything or making a move of that sort knowing that it would affect the bottom line of the province of Ontario. The finance minister must have been involved. When we have this all-party committee, we'll get down to that and we'll find out the real truth.

Right now, the people in Sarnia-Lambton are wondering when the former Minister of Energy will join the debate and explain his role in this fiasco. Right now,

people in Sarnia-Lambton and across this province are wondering when the current Minister of Energy will also join the debate and explain this mess, and how he allowed the Premier of this province to hang this millstone around his neck and cause the heartache and problems to himself. I think he's carrying the can for this whole government, for former ministers and for a decision that was made that's unduly going to affect his career, and it's unfortunate.

Why won't this government release all documents to the estimates committee so that they may carry out their work that they are mandated to do by the ancient parliamentary rules of our Legislature?

Some of those questions are those that the people of Sarnia-Lambton have asked me to raise here. Maybe they have those questions because the values and lessons in responsibility that people learned growing up in the rural part of Ontario and especially in Sarnia-Lambton are different than values and lessons people learn elsewhere. I would doubt that, but there may be an explanation in that.

Because the residents of Sarnia-Lambton are listening and are so interested in this motion of contempt in the production of these documents, I'm going to take the opportunity to lay out a few of the facts for my constituents who are listening at home. It is now well documented that this decision was made in reaction to the overwhelming community opposition prior to the last election campaign with regard to these gas plants. In his testimony, in his own words to the estimates committee on July 19, 2012, the Minister of Finance stated unequivocally: "This was a campaign undertaking at a time when I think we were still behind in the polls, so it required a government decision, which occurred after the election."

Then, during a meeting of the estimates committee, the Liberals first tried to claim that the matter of canceling gas plants was before the courts so as to prevent documents from being tabled; this argument was ruled invalid. Next, the members argued solicitor-client privilege. Again, this argument was ruled not applicable by the Chair at the time, striking down their ability to tie up the committee's request for documents. Finally, the government argued that documents related to the cancelled plants were commercially sensitive and thus too important to share with those elected representatives of the Ontario Legislature. Again, the committee demanded those documents, and despite the authority of the committee, the Minister of Energy still refused to co-operate. As a result, the estimates committee had no choice but to table a report to this House advising the Speaker that the Minister of Energy could be in breach of privilege for contempt of the Legislature because of his refusal to table those documents.

It should be noted at this point that \$190 million is just the cost to relocate the proposed site for the plant at Mississauga. The actual construction and cost of building transmission lines from Lambton county to the GTA,

where the power would be needed, is still to be determined. Many of us had hoped that that sort of information would be included in one of the 36,000 pages released by the Minister of Energy, but unfortunately, it wasn't.

On August 27, 2012, the member from Cambridge raised a point of privilege to draw attention to the minister's refusal or failure to table documents to the committee. On September 13, 2012, the Speaker of the day ruled a *prima facie* breach of privilege, and made the express point that the Minister of Energy was obligated to table all the requested documents, and Parliament has an absolute right to call for people, papers and things per the standing orders and those ancient rights and prerogatives of the Legislature.

Then, on the very day—September 24, 2012—that the Liberal government was to table those documents requested by the estimates committee, they announced that a settlement between the province and TransCanada Corp. for the cancellation of the Oakville power plant had finally been reached.

The Minister of Energy indicated during question period in this House that the cost to protect the seat in Oakville would be what he termed "a good deal"—his words—at \$40 million. That's not a good deal in Sarnia-Lambton, Mr. Speaker; it might be in Toronto and even in London. I'm not sure.

The documents released later that morning, however, indicate that the true cost to save the Liberal member's seat in Oakville and relocate this gas plant would be closer to the neighbourhood of \$450 million. That's broken down as \$210 million for those turbines that TransCanada had already purchased, \$200 million for new transmission lines and \$40 million in non-recoverable costs. Mr. Speaker, those are the undisputable facts and bring us to where we are today.

Again, just to reiterate, the former speaker mentioned that \$190 million was awarded to the company to cancel the plant in Mississauga, and \$450 million to not build a plant in Oakville. This is \$640 million at a minimum that we know has been drained from the provincial treasury by this Liberal campaign team and the Minister of Energy—the former minister and the present minister—without a single megawatt of power being produced anywhere in this province. For myself and the people of Sarnia-Lambton, it's truly unbelievable that at a time when our community in Sarnia-Lambton and those across this province are facing so many challenges, the massive sum of \$640 million could be willfully squandered by this Liberal government. None of this makes any sense to the people of Sarnia-Lambton.

It's not surprising that the minister decided to move the cancelled Mississauga plant to Lambton county. Sarnia-Lambton has long been known as the energy hub of Ontario and has long met the energy needs and petrochemical needs for the people of Ontario and, in fact, North America. My community relishes this role it plays in the province. We have over 5,000 skilled trades workers in my riding just chomping at the bit to get ready

to build this energy infrastructure that will support this province for future generations.

A number of years ago, the former minister and this present minister could have taken my advice. I wrote to them at that time advocating, on behalf of the community of Sarnia and the Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce, that we would take the present Lambton generating station, which is idle most of the time, and renovate that plant and turn it into a gas-fired plant at that time—go off coal and go to gas. I was surprised that the minister didn't take my free advice, but maybe the advice he was getting from the treasurer—because I noticed in estimates, I was watching in estimates one day—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Why spend nothing, Bob, when you can spend \$650 million?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Exactly. I was watching the Minister of Finance in estimates one day, and he was asked that question by one of our members on the committee that day. I actually asked him to ask it; I was unavailable to be there. The minister said, "Oh, you can't revamp a coal plant. To my knowledge, it wouldn't be possible to revamp the coal plant." Well, that's ludicrous, but if that's the kind of advice that a senior member of cabinet—the executive council—is giving to his colleagues, I can understand why there has been such a foul-up on this. On the OPA's and OPG's own website, they talk about the possibilities of retrofitting coal plants to gas. It's on the grid, it's got the infrastructure and the employees, and it could be done. They could have saved themselves a whole lot of money by doing this. They wouldn't be paying a company \$190 million as a penalty fee to come down to Lambton county. That's another story for another day. We'll get into that another time. Let's get this committee started.

Interjection: Good idea. Get that committee started.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. To this government, \$190 million or \$300 million or \$640 million means very little. The Minister of Energy—and the Premier, by his own admission—believes \$40 million spent on something called "unrecoverable" is a good deal for the people of Ontario. They obviously went to the C.D. Howe—who was a former minister in the federal government who said in the 1956 pipeline debate, for those who are historians, "What's a million?" when he was questioned on that. I see the member from Wellington-Halton Hills nodding his head. Maybe that's the school of thought the Liberal politicians went to.

I heard quite a history lesson the other day from the member for Peterborough about John Robarts and Leslie Frost, but I never hear them talk about Mitch Hepburn. I never hear the Liberals ever talk about Mitch Hepburn. Someday I'm going to get up, and I'll read into the record some stuff about Mitch Hepburn. They never mention Mitch Hepburn. You'd think the government—they only talk about Frost and Davis and Robarts, and there's a good reason they talk about them: because they delivered responsible, good government to the province of Ontario.

Interjection: That's a good comment.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Good segue, eh?

1640

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They weren't too very darned proud of Peterson either.

Mr. Robert Bailey: No, no. I forgot about him.

In the last two months, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Community and Social Services knows specifically that my community is facing challenges, as all communities in Ontario are, in funding supports for adults living with developmental disabilities. In the last two months alone, two families in my community have notified my office that because of lack of provincial funding, they can no longer physically or financially care for their adult children and, as a last resort, they have had to make the heart-wrenching decision of surrendering their children to the care of province.

Now, how do I go back and tell them there's no money for care when \$650 million or more has been wasted on this fiasco? I don't know how any Liberal member can stand up with a straight face and say this was a good deal. I tell you, it doesn't sell back in Sarnia-Lambton. I wish somebody would come down there and try and make that case.

The political games this government is engaged in are threatening supports and services that are so important to the people of this province, and the people of this province are taking notice.

I'd like to read into the record an article titled *Hiding the Gas Fiasco* that was in the *National Post* the other day. I won't have time to read it all; I see my time is limited, unless the member from Durham will move unanimous consent that I have more time.

"The Ontario government, perpetually digging itself out from under its energy policy messes, has mastered the art of shovelling costs off to other agencies in the hope that nobody will notice. Last week, in another typical move, Energy Minister Chris Bentley announced that the government's main electricity agency, the ... OPA ... had successfully negotiated the Liberals out from under the government's breach" of a "\$1.2-billion contract."

I won't read the rest of it; it's on record. Ladies and gentlemen, I recommend you go to the *National Post*.

They say, "Since when do companies, in this case TransCanada Corp., walk away from a deal worth a billion dollars in exchange for peanuts? They don't and there's no reason to believe TransCanada has done it this time."

This will all be coming out in the record.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to skip on: "It appears that by 2017, when the new plant is completed, OPA—which is not an operating company but a policy-making-outfit—will be sitting on a \$210-million liability. When the plant starts producing electricity, TransCanada will repay the \$210 million over the 20-year term of the contract. Under Ontario's green energy plan, even if the Bath plant's power—we're now talking about the plant near Napanee—"is not needed, electricity ratepayers will still pay for the electricity they don't need.

"That the new plant may never be needed is no surprise." I heard the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington say this morning, I think, that the existing plant there, which is a gas and oil plant, is sitting idle. It's a 2,100-megawatt plant. All the infrastructure is there. Why would we build another brand new plant there and spend those millions and millions of dollars?

"The final cost of the Oakville contract breach, likely in the hundreds of millions, will be added to the \$190 million the government paid to kill" the plant at Mississauga.

"One way or another, these costs are going to show up in the bills received by Ontario electricity consumers.... The OPA turbine purchase will have to be paid for. And OPG—the provincially owned electricity generator—has become the dumping ground for the whims of past and present Liberal energy ministers. A few examples of costly directives" are "Big Becky, a new tunnel under Niagara Falls that will add marginal" production "at a cost of \$1.6-billion." The price for this will be somewhere between 12 cents and 14 cents over its life.

"OPG was directed to proceed with Mattagami, a \$2.6-billion hydro dam project that will produce power in the spring, when demand is low," when wind and solar are produced, and they will spill. That cost was unknown but likely will average 20 cents.

These are all records from Parker Gallant in the National Post.

"OPG has been directed to give up land use in Lambton near Samia for the Greenfield gas plant instead of a much cheaper conversion of the ... coal units at that location. The Power Workers Union estimated that 950 MW of coal generation at Lambton could have been converted" for much less "than the \$190-million cost to move the Mississauga plant." On the OPG website, Minister of Finance Duncan said he didn't think that was possible.

"As a result of the policy dumping, OPG will no longer be able to contain the rising costs of renewable energy entering the grid due to 'first to the grid' rights that wind and solar have been granted in Ontario. Consumers will find that the 5.3-cents-per-kWh cost of OPG power in 2011 will increase substantially as these various projects reach the production stage...."

Again, these are the thoughts and opinions of Ontario residents who are fed up with the way this government is handling business in Ontario.

But it's not only the public. I'm going to read the Toronto Star. It had a couple of headlines yesterday in the newspaper. It read, "Liberal MPPs Vent over 'Embarrassing' Power Plant Payouts." The Star reporter described how many members of the government caucus and backbenchers are becoming worn out by the actions of this Premier in the matters of this province.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: How many of you really knew what was going on?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm sure many of the members—they're all honourable members, and if they'd known what was going on, they wouldn't have to sit here today

and defend it. Some people should have stood up and threatened to resign over it, like members in the past have.

This is a quote from the Star: "Some MPPs insisted they would have been just as candid if" the Premier "had been in the room, while others said that his absence made it easier to rage"—rage against the night—"against decisions made by the Premier and his senior advisers."

"We've got to get out of this. This is embarrassing," one minister told her caucus" colleagues.

An editorial piece again, Mr. Speaker, in the Toronto Star, entitled "McGuinty Owes Ontarians an Apology for Power Plant Fiasco," published September 25: "... power plant far from where the electricity is actually needed. It is shelling out at least \$40 million"—that's another.

"Cancelling the Oakville power plant and moving it to eastern Ontario is anything but the 'very good deal for taxpayers'.... It's shocking that he could have" said this—is the Premier, in Oakville—"with a straight face, repeatedly called this debacle a deal. Granted, it's a less bad deal than the \$190 million the Liberal government spent to cancel a Mississauga power plant just two weeks before last October's election. But that's an absurdly low bar" they've set for themselves.

"Worse, the government withheld public documents on the Oakville" plant "for so long that" the minister "now finds himself in the middle of a rare contempt-of-Parliament charge—a mess the Liberals"—the government, the executive council—"brought on themselves."

"In total, Ontarians will ... pay at least \$230 million and get absolutely nothing for it."

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, I see my time is running out.

A lot of what we've asked for in this Legislature is predicated on having a select committee to move events. I'd like to read from Hansard, Mr. Speaker. This is the Legislative Assembly debates of May 12, 2003. A very esteemed member of this Legislature at this time, who was a member then—Premier McGuinty—said:

"We're going to start by scrapping the changes made by the Harris-Eves government that concentrated power in the Premier's office...."

"We're going to give legislative committees more clout, enhancing their powers to call ministers and question them in depth about the issues of the day."

"We're going to give power to an all-party committee to initiate legislation. We saw something fabulous that took place in an all-party"—that was Premier McGuinty on May 12, 2003.

If it was good enough for the backbencher and—I guess the Leader of the Opposition at that time; I'll correct myself. If it was good enough for Premier McGuinty at that time, as Leader of the Opposition, it should be good enough for this government and Premier McGuinty at this time.

I would urge that the government think about this contempt motion, evaluate what you've done, how you've mishandled the finances of this province, the energy file, and do the right thing.

I'm sure it's going to be a great weekend in Ottawa. I wish I was able to be there. But I'm sure there will be a lot of debate about this, and there should be. When you get in that ballot box and the secrecy of the ballot box down there, you folks know what to do. Do the right thing. When you get in there, do the right thing. Send a message. Send a message. Better days are ahead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'm pleased to join the debate and to go over what has happened, because we really have a situation here where nothing new has been brought forward, and yet—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: We listened to your members when they spoke, with respect—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would appeal to members on the opposition benches. Everyone has had their opportunity to speak. You may disagree with them—that's your personal opinion—but I'd ask you to let the debate carry on.

The member for York Centre.

1650

Mr. Monte Kwinter: The official opposition have ground the business of the Ontario Legislature to a halt again. The Tories spent all spring delaying the people's business and now we have this.

Today we were supposed to have a third reading vote about the healthy homes renovation tax credit, something that will improve Ontarians' lives and help our seniors. Instead, the opposition has hijacked the Legislature to debate the nuances of documents they admit they haven't even read.

Let's remember what happened here. The Tories asked us for documents. We made the case that providing these documents would compromise our ability to negotiate with TransCanada. We concluded the negotiations and the opposition received all 36,000 pages of documents that complied with their request. We followed through. As elected officials, we have to balance the supremacy of Parliament with the public interest, and our government did just that.

But the opposition is trying to throw any mud they can against the wall in a desperate attempt to see if anything sticks. The motion is purely about partisan politics and nothing more. They're making a mockery of the institution of Parliament, and Ontario deserves better.

As I'm sure the members of this House are aware, the OPA contracted to have the Oakville facility built to meet energy demands of the area at the time. The Ontario Power Authority contracted with TransCanada Energy Ltd. in September 2009 to design, build and operate, over a 20-year term, a 900-megawatt natural-gas-fired electricity generating facility in Oakville. In October 2007, the government determined that the project would not proceed.

It did so for two reasons: clear evidence that it no longer required a facility in Oakville to meet energy demands, and a response to the significant concerns voiced by the community and local elected officials, including Mayor Rob Burton, MPP Kevin Flynn and, yes, MPP Ted Chudleigh. The government's decision was not only supported by the local community; it was supported by Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs. In Hansard of June 1, 2010, Mr. Chudleigh: "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them." In the *Globe and Mail* of September 25, 2011, Mr. Hudak: "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga."

While no formal litigation resulted from the government's decision, the government and TransCanada had been engaged in formal arbitration and confidential settlement discussions until a resolution was successfully reached on September 24, 2012.

In April 2005, the Ontario Power Authority contracted with Greenfield South Power Corp. to develop and operate a 300-megawatt natural-gas-fired electricity generating station in Mississauga. Over the course of the next number of years, particularly as construction got under way at the facility, community concerns were brought to the attention of the government and all of the political parties during the fall 2011 general election campaign. During the campaign, the Ontario Liberal Party made a commitment in response to mounting community concern that, if re-elected, the government would relocate the Mississauga facility to another location. The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party and the Ontario New Democratic Party made the same commitment during the course of the campaign.

In the *Globe and Mail*, September 25, 2011, Mr. Hudak said, "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga."

Shortly after being re-elected, our government announced its intention to relocate the Mississauga facility. In this case, there were some formal litigation proceedings under way, as well as confidential settlement discussions in relation to the cancellation of this project, until a resolution was successfully reached on July 10, 2012. After some long and hard negotiations, the OPA and the proponent reached a deal to relocate the 300-megawatt natural gas plant on part of Ontario Power Generation's Lambton generating station site. The new site will take advantage of existing transmission and other infrastructure, as well as the expertise of local workers. The construction of the plant is expected to provide up to 200 jobs over the next two years.

Over the course of the past several weeks, the official opposition and the third party have attempted to create a myth that the Minister of Energy wilfully attempted to hide or conceal these documents from the Legislature. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Let's look at the facts.

Between May 9 and July 11, the Minister of Energy appeared before the Standing Committee on Estimates for the purpose of answering questions regarding the

2012-13 estimates of the Ministry of Energy. While the minister answered questions relating to a number of issues, the committee members from the official opposition spent considerable time asking the minister questions relating to the two gas plants which were to have been built in Oakville and Mississauga respectively.

While before the committee, the Minister of Energy was placed in a difficult position. He was repeatedly asked to answer questions relating to the Oakville and Mississauga facilities. The overwhelming majority of the questions related specifically to the ongoing outstanding legal proceedings and confidential negotiations. The Minister of Energy attempted to strike an effective balance between the committee's authority to ask these questions and request those documents and the need to protect the public interest in the midst of highly sensitive commercial negotiations and litigation. He had a responsibility as a minister of the crown, and it is different than the responsibility that we have as members.

The Chair of the committee, the member for Beaches-East York, recognized the precarious situation of the Minister of Energy. In fact, he repeatedly ruled that while committee members were permitted to ask such questions, the minister was able to exercise his discretion and respond to such questions in a manner that protected the interests of the province.

In Hansard of May 16, Mr. Prue said, "The minister has the right to decline either giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during his answering of the questions."

In Hansard of May 16, Mr. Prue also said, "I would advise that I'm going to allow the motion to proceed, but I would also advise—and I think the minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and I would expect him to do so. That would be my ruling."

The minister relied on the Chair's repeated statements and rulings that the minister was permitted to respond to questions and document requests from committee members in a manner that protected the interests of the province. As a result, the minister wrote to the committee on May 30 and advised the committee that he was exercising his discretion and would not be able to produce the requested documentation, as they were confidential, subject to solicitor-client privilege and litigation privilege or highly commercially sensitive.

Unfortunately, the official opposition ignored the flags that were raised by the minister. They showed no restraint, something we've seen so often from the Ontario PC Party in this place.

On June 5, the member from Cambridge moved a motion to report to the House the minister's failure to produce all responsive records pursuant to the motion of May 16, and to kick-start these contempt proceedings.

The official opposition and the third party, in their attempt to vilify the Minister of Energy and score cheap political points, will tell you that the minister hid or concealed records, and it's simply not true.

Let's deal with the facts: The records show that the Minister of Energy at all times was trying to balance two important, yet competitive, public interests: supremacy of Parliament versus protecting of taxpayers' interests.

And here is the best proof of all. On July 10, the minister announced that the OPA had reached an agreement with Greenfield to relocate the Mississauga facility, and the government had accepted the OPA's recommendation to relocate the Mississauga facility to the Lambton station in Sarnia. In addition, the minister announced that it had settled the related civil proceedings in the state of New York. The legal matters relating to the Mississauga gas plant having been settled, the minister directed his ministry to provide the committee with all correspondence relating to the Mississauga facility that was responsive to the motion of May 16, except for records that were subject to solicitor-client privilege. Those documents were provided to the committee. If he was trying to hide or conceal the documents, why would he have released them the moment he had a settlement with respect to the Mississauga gas plant?

1700

Let's deal with the facts: As the negotiations with TransCanada regarding the Oakville plant were still ongoing, the minister was not in a position to produce the documents prior to the Speaker's ruling. On September 13, 2012, the Speaker ruled that while a *prima facie* breach of privilege had been established, he would set aside the matter and ask the three House leaders to take it upon themselves to find a path that can satisfy the request of the estimates committee.

The traditional procedure when the Speaker apprises the House that a *prima facie* breach of privilege has been found is that the member raising the matter is immediately allowed to move a motion. In this matter, however, the Speaker exercised his discretion to follow the novel approach adopted by Speaker Milliken in the Afghan detainee matter by setting aside his ruling in order to allow the House leaders to devise a means where both their concerns are met. His approach was taken for two reasons, as evident in the Speaker's ruling. The Speaker recognized that there were two competing public interests at play: the interests of the committee in exercising its parliamentary privileges and the interests of the Minister of Energy in temporarily refraining from the disclosure of sensitive information in the midst of commercial negotiations and related proceedings.

The recognition of the opportunity for the three parties, through frank communication, to settle the matter in a way that satisfied the request of the estimates committee—the Speaker's ruling clearly laid out that this was a unique situation, unlike the case of privilege, that warranted a unique solution. The House leaders met on four separate occasions to determine whether a solution could be found. On this side of the House, we had high hopes that the parties would ultimately reach a solution that struck a balance between the competing public interests identified in the Speaker's ruling, and the government tabled two separate proposals that would have

facilitated the public release of the records while accommodating the government's concern about the ongoing commercial negotiations from related proceedings.

Unfortunately, the discussions didn't get off to a good start. The opposition wouldn't attend the meeting that you, Mr. Speaker, had set up last week to broker a solution. I think that's a pretty good indication of how committed they were to the process: not at all. The opposition House leaders were unwilling to consider the government's proposal or engage in any serious discussion.

On Friday, we asked them to attend a meeting. They stayed less than five minutes and threw in the towel, making it clear that they were not interested in negotiating. It's extremely disappointing that the opposition decided on Friday to walk away from the negotiations. It's irresponsible and shows they just don't care about the Speaker's authority or Ontario taxpayers. Instead of trying to use the weekend to find a solution, they decided to play politics, point fingers and ignore the public interest. Instead of trying to find common ground, as the Speaker requested, they left and used the time to spin the media with inaccuracies.

Shortly after announcing the settlement of the Oakville matter, the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority released all 36,000 records that were responsive to the original motion of the estimates committee. The government even went so far as to put each and every document on a USB key and to provide one to each of the opposition parties, in addition to the Clerk. The request of this committee for these documents has been satisfied; the matter should be over.

We should be standing here today working together and debating legislation to make this province a better place. So why are we debating this contempt motion? This is about the politics of constant conflict that we have seen perpetrated by the Ontario PC caucus over the past 12 months in this province. This is about the factions that are now in control of the Ontario PC Party. They see compromise and co-operation as weakness. They see politics as a blood sport and government as a dirty word. This is the same crew that referred to new Canadians as foreign workers in the 2011 election campaign, and the one who authorized hateful literature during the campaign. These are the same people who orchestrated the defeat of one of the longest-serving members of their own caucus, the former member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills. This is the party that opposed the first budget in the first minority government in years in Ontario before they even looked at it. This is the faction that voted to remove interest arbitration reform from the budget even though they were proposing that in their Changebook. It is the party that rang bells, filibustered committees and blocked legislation for months in the spring session.

This is not the party of John Robarts and Bill Davis. Those fine gentlemen would never have used this place for such callous and vindictive means as this.

Why are we here? It's simple. The opposition is on a political witch hunt.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to add a couple of things historically. In 2002, when the Conservative government

of the day tabled their budget, they said it was balanced. When we came to power, we found that not only was it not balanced but there was a \$6-billion deficit. To this day, the Conservative Party says that is not true, notwithstanding that the Auditor General has confirmed it. It just goes to show that they think all the virtue remains on one side.

I want to tell you another little story; this was back when Larry Grossman was leader of the party. He stood up—we had a deficit—and he said, "The Conservative government has never had a deficit." At that time, I was finance critic and had the records, and I went over to him and said, "Larry, the last three budgets you had were deficits." He said, "You're kidding." I said, "I'm not kidding. They were deficits." He said, "I can't believe that. I was always under the impression that we never had a deficit."

We have this situation where, if this isn't what I consider to be a redundancy—everything that has to be said has been said. And I'm as guilty as anyone; I'm repeating things that everybody else has already said. So if that isn't obstructing and hijacking the Legislature, nothing is. We're going to be hearing more and more people saying exactly the same thing, when instead, we should be getting this to committee, getting it to a point where we can actually ask questions. Because you're not going to get any answers from us; we're giving you our point of view, and you're giving us your point of view.

I think it's time that we get to the business we're here to do, and that is to look after the people of Ontario and bring forward the legislation that's standing on the order paper.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I have been watching this debate with some interest for the last few days. If we had a moment of silence for every million dollars wasted on these power plants, the House would have to remain silent for 10 hours. That's how much money we've spent.

Interjection: Isn't that something?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Terrible. It's just awful.

I would like to open my talk and remind the House of a couple of passages that I think are very—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Keep us awake. That's all we're asking.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'll try.

Anyway, our leader, the leader of the official opposition, made a statement in the House, and he had a very good first paragraph. He said, "I want to begin by saying how utterly regretful it is that we have come to this point, to the point where a minister of the crown, somebody entrusted with billions of dollars of investments and taxpayers' money, is on the verge potentially of being found in contempt of the very Ontario Legislature that he is here to serve, in contempt of his colleagues in his own party, and the parties on the other side of the House, and thereby in contempt of hard-working taxpayers across" Ontario.

Speaker, the energy minister is facing a serious and unprecedented situation in our province's history. The

Speaker of this House found that there was a *prima facie* case of contempt by the Minister of Energy when he did not provide documents relating to the relocation costs of the Oakville power plant.

Furthermore, we are now debating a motion to find the energy minister in contempt of Parliament because the material he reluctantly tabled is full of whited-out sections or information that is entirely missing.

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Speaker, this issue of contempt was debated in this Legislature some 104 years ago. In 1908, a member of this House—oddly enough named Mr. Henry Pettypiece—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: No relation.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Mr. Pettypiece spelled his name different from mine. I've had some colleagues ask me if I'm related to him, which I am not. But like Mr. Pettypiece in 1908, I now find myself in a similar situation: debating a motion of contempt.

I'd also like to quote the PC House leader, the member for Simcoe—Grey, in his letter to the Speaker on September 25, 2012. He says, "Clearly, the minister, the government House leader and the Premier do not understand the gravity of this matter. The powers and ancient privileges of the House are not some game with which the McGuinty Liberals get to play. Rather, those powers and privileges afforded to the democratically elected officials of Ontarians are the hallmark and the cornerstone of our provincial Parliament and our representative democracy."

The member from Simcoe—Grey summarizes well the importance of this motion. He explains why the government's refusal to hand over all of the documents relating to moving the Oakville power plant is an attack on our parliamentary democracy.

I was troubled by a comment from the government House leader earlier this week, who likened this debate to a "kangaroo court." Speaker, it is outrageous that a minister of the crown would compare our Legislature, the cornerstone of our province's democratic society, to a kangaroo court. I was also troubled to hear the Minister of Consumer Services refer to the contempt motion earlier today as "frivolous and vexatious."

Furthermore, the Premier himself said this to the Canadian Press earlier this week: "I'm hoping that the opposition will have their fun, come to their senses, and recognize that we've got to move beyond this." Mr. Premier, this is not a laughing matter. It is not a game. Your energy minister is facing a motion of being in contempt of this Legislature.

The Premier's comments, the government House leader's comments and the Minister of Consumer Services' comments show the arrogance of this government and their obvious disregard for this House. Their words also show a disregard for our democratic rights and beliefs. The government keeps accusing us of bringing this Legislature to a halt. They say that we are holding up the business of the House. Just this afternoon, our House leader asked for unanimous consent to have all legislative committees re-established. But how did the government

respond? They said no. So don't blame us for tying up the business of the House.

Speaker, I'd like to provide an example of an interesting case in the United Kingdom involving an accusation of contempt of Parliament. In the British House of Commons in 1819—that's just before our relatives came here from the old country over in Ireland—a man was found guilty for a "willful suppression of evidence, and a high contempt of the authority of this House." The offender destroyed a document after appearing before a parliamentary committee. The Sergeant-at-Arms held the man in custody until the next day, when he was later released.

Let me quote the Speaker of the British House of Commons from this incident in 1819:

"This is an offence of the most serious and grave nature, both as affecting the dignity of this House and the ends of justice; and had this offence been committed by you with the deliberate intention of impeding the examination now in progress, it would have been the bounden duty of this House to have punished it with the utmost severity."

Even though those words were spoken 193 years ago, I think they are very appropriate for the debate we are having here today.

What this government has done is totally inexcusable. They have wasted hundreds of millions of dollars in a desperate attempt to hold onto Liberal seats in Mississauga and Oakville. What's worse, the Minister of Energy and the Liberal government intentionally worked to keep taxpayers in the dark on the true cost of these cancelled power plants.

Speaker, I have been involved in service to my community for many years, and I believe I have spoken before about my membership in the Monkon Lions Club since 1987. We have helped with many projects in our community, such as building a new arena, rebuilding our Lions Pavilion, and helping to build a world-class baseball diamond where we hosted an international invitational fastball tournament for many years.

The Lions Club motto is "We Serve," and we have a number of guidelines to help us in our work, one of which is: Do not tear down another person's house in order to improve your own. I am not going to stand here and criticize the personal integrity of the Minister of Energy. I believe him to be a person who works hard for his constituents. It's too bad his party is letting him flounder. They've thrown him under the bus and they're not helping him get out from underneath it.

The Minister of Energy was forced to supply documents to the House about the decision to move the Oakville power plant; however, he did not do this. We did not ask him to provide redacted documents or whited-out documents or documents with missing attachments. Speaker, we asked for all the documents. The reason that parts of the documents are missing is because of my previously stated remarks; it is because the Minister of Energy or the Premier or the previous energy minister, Mr. Duguid, did not want this Legislature or the people of Ontario to know what the whole story really is.

I want to point out that the Minister of Energy is not only facing a motion of contempt by the Legislature but he is also facing the contempt of many people in Ontario. They are upset with this government and their failed Green Energy Act. They are angry that industrial wind turbines are being forced upon them with no regard for their concerns. The government said that they listened to local opposition of the gas plants and that's why they cancelled them, but they will not listen to local governments in rural ridings.

In Perth–Wellington, we are very concerned about this government's policy on wind turbines. The government is quite prepared to pay hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to save the Liberal-held seats in the GTA. It is quite prepared to conceal documents that reveal the true extent of their politically motivated waste and mismanagement. Yet when it comes to our concerns in rural and small-town Ontario, this government and this minister are prepared to dismiss them without a second thought.

This is the kind of double standard that contributes to the rural-urban divide. I spoke about this growing divide in my motion which was debated in this House on September 6. This government, in my opinion, has widened the rural-urban divide to an extent that is both unprecedented and unacceptable. Here are just a few ways that they've done that.

They introduced a Green Energy Act which time has proven to be a costly failure and a massive power grab. Inflated prices for wind and solar projects have driven the cost of energy through the roof.

Without any credible economic analysis, they cancelled the slots-at-racetracks program. They created chaos in our province's horse racing industry, showing contempt for rural and small-town Ontario.

They increased the burden of red tape and duplication affecting our rural and small-town municipalities. They provided no funding and very little direction for municipalities about the new source water protection act.

1720

Speaker, they continue to overregulate agriculture. The Endangered Species Act fails to compensate farmers should an endangered bird or animal be found on their property.

They also brought in school transportation procurement policies that have wreaked havoc in rural Ontario, destroying the livelihoods of those who for many years have safely transported our children to school every day.

They stood by while their policies caused hydro costs to skyrocket. Manufacturers—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to section 23(b) of the standing orders, where a member "directs his or speech to matters other than,

"(i) the question under discussion; or

"(ii) a motion or amendment that she intends to move; or

"(iii) a point of order."

I think we're straying somewhat in terms of the motion that's currently before the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank the member for his point of order. I'm listening very carefully, and I will rule when I realize that he's off track.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker.

They have also stood by while their policies caused hydro costs to skyrocket. Manufacturers, small businesses and residential customers took a big hit, yet the government showed no concern for them, not even for seniors or those on fixed incomes.

Finally, they refused to share gas tax revenues with small and rural municipalities.

These examples show a government out of touch with rural and small-town Ontario, but it's worse than that. Through the actions of the Minister of Energy, the government has shown contempt for all taxpayers—indeed, all citizens in this province. This government is unwilling to acknowledge the high price Ontario is paying for their mismanagement. In reading documents—the very limited and select documents that the Minister of Energy was forced to release—it becomes clear that the government is not coming clean on all the costs involved in relocating the Oakville power plant. It will cost taxpayers much, much more than \$40 million. The true costs will be closer to \$450 million, and when we add in the Mississauga plant, the amount rises to \$640 million or \$650 million.

Speaker, \$650 million could hire a lot of doctors and a lot of nurses for our communities in Perth–Wellington. On a personal note, my brother-in-law suffers from Lou Gehrig's disease. There's no cure for that. Just think: \$600 million might have gone to research into that disease. It's just incredible. The government could have used the \$640 million to partner with our municipalities to maintain the roads and bridges we use every day.

Getting back to the documents the Minister of Energy was forced to table this week: As outlined in schedule B of the memorandum of understanding between the government and TransCanada, there is a \$40-million payment for unrecovered costs and a \$210-million payment to purchase TransCanada's gas turbines.

The OPA documents further reveal that an additional \$200 million will be required for new transmission lines, a cost which was concealed by the Minister of Energy for the past two years.

But don't just take the figures presented in the MOU. Let me turn to the Society of Energy Professionals to see what they say about the Oakville power plant relocation. The Society of Energy Professionals says that the \$40-million figure neglects to talk about all the other, much larger, associated costs. The society says that it is imperative that taxpayers also be allowed to look at both the original contract signed with TransCanada and the new contract.

The Society of Energy Professionals also talks about the process behind the relocation of the Oakville power

plant. Mr. Rodney Sheppard, president of the Society of Energy Professionals, has this to say about the Oakville power plant relocations:

"Transparency in this matter is paramount. We should know what rates people will be paying for decades to come as a result of this deal. This decision once again demonstrates that political expediency and not system planning is what drives electricity policy in Ontario."

Clearly this is a government that governs by polls, not according to an energy policy which is in the best interests of the province. They are playing politics with Ontario's energy system in a bid to save Liberal seats in the GTA.

Speaker, I would recommend to the government a book called *The Power of Parliamentary Houses to Send for Persons, Papers and Records: A Sourcebook on the Law and Precedent of Parliamentary Subpoena Powers for Canadian and other Houses*. The book was written in 1999 by former Liberal member of Parliament Derek Lee. Mr. Lee served as an MP for 23 years; he is an authority on the topic of parliamentary democracy. In his book, Mr. Lee cites the following examples for people being found in contempt of Parliament in the past:

- refusing to be sworn or take upon themselves some corresponding obligation to tell the truth;
- refusing to answer questions;
- refusing to produce documents in their possession, or destroying documents in their possession that have been sent for;
- giving false evidence;
- willfully suppressing the truth;
- persistently misleading at committee; and
- trifling with a committee.

Such examples of contempt obviously apply today in this government. They should apologize to the people of Ontario.

Although I wasn't a member of provincial Parliament at the time my colleague the member for Simcoe-Grey stepped aside from his role as a Minister of Health, I nevertheless was watching provincial politics. The member for Simcoe-Grey resigned with honour and dignity over a mistake made by a member of his staff. He understood the concept of ministerial responsibility. He stepped down; he did the right thing.

There was also the resignation of now-Senator Bob Runciman because of mistakes someone made in revealing the identity of a young offender in a speech from the throne. Senator Runciman did the right thing. He did not show contempt for this Legislature; his actions were noble.

There's an interesting editorial in yesterday's Toronto Star. Here's what it had to say about the power plant relocation:

"Instead of trying to convince skeptical Ontarians that these decisions were 'missteps' and things aren't as bad as they seem, McGuinty and his energy minister ought to come clean and issue a frank apology for what is, at root, a political fiasco driven by electoral considerations."

Let me remind members that this editorial was in the Toronto Star.

The amount of spin I'm hearing from the government as they rally the troops and try to protect the Minister of Energy is making me dizzy. A couple of hours ago, the member from Mississauga South had the audacity to blame a photocopier for putting blank pages in the 36,000 pages of documents that the Minister of Energy was forced to table.

I've only got 12 seconds here. Unfortunately I can't get to the rest of it, but we need to get this to committees; we need to form committees. And that's the way we have to get this done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thanks very much, Speaker.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: What's that?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Preach to us, Ted.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Brothers and sisters—

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes.

I wanted to start by sharing something that my dad used to share with me a lot when I was a kid. He would say, "Teddy"—Little Teddy. I hated it when he called me Little Teddy. You can see I'm not Little Teddy anymore. He would say, "Good judgment is based on experience and experience invariably on bad judgment," to which my mother would add, just to clarify, "Teddy, that means learn from your mistakes."

Good judgment is based on experience, and experience is invariably—

1730

Mrs. Liz Sandals: And mothers are always helpful.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: And mothers take a much more simple and direct approach with their kids than dads do.

I only say that because no one in this Legislature is saying that these two plants that will cost the people of Ontario a pretty penny, to say the least, were a good idea. In fact, decidedly, the contrary is the case. Mayor Burton didn't like it. The MPPs from a couple of parties didn't like it. The people didn't like it.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Mayor McCallion certainly didn't—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: God help you when Mayor McCallion doesn't like something and wants to tell you about it. It was out there.

In the election campaign, there were crowds of people who followed the various candidates for political office around to make sure that they knew they didn't like it either. Looking back, the "good judgment based on experience" motive, I think—motif—fits, and fits well enough that every political party, ironically, during the campaign, said that if they were to have the good fortune to be elected to government, they would cancel the plants, too.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: And it would have been free of charge.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Sufficient in the knowledge that they didn't have to explain—well, maybe that's not fair. Maybe you had costed it in your program. Maybe you had done the research and costed what that would have been. But again, let's understand that there appeared an emerging consensus that it didn't make sense and we should stop it, and as history will record, we did exactly that, having made the commitment.

Now, from all of that, the legal jargon and everything else, we now get this contempt motion, and I'm having some difficulty with it. I've got to tell you why.

No one in this Legislative Assembly moved a contempt motion as the old Tory government flip-flopped on their energy policy, ultimately leaving Ontario with a \$25-billion-plus stranded debt, which we're still paying off. The member for Perth—Wellington said, "If we had a moment of silence for every million dollars, this place would come to a standstill." I want to tell you, if we had a moment's silence for every million dollars that constituted the stranded debt, I calculated that we'd take 56 weeks off here. We wouldn't do any work in a year for that. I appreciated actually the creativity of the member from Perth—Wellington, but maybe he doesn't have the same sense of history that some of us do.

We had the municipal partners out there that we try, on a good day—we don't always listen as well as we could. Downloading's a good example of that. Forced amalgamation's a good example of that. You want to talk about democracy? We had a referendum in my municipality, and 98.4% said, "Don't do it."

Mrs. Liz Sandals: And they did it.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: But they did it. But you know what? No one moved a motion of censure on that that I recall. I would have loved to. No, I wouldn't have, because that would not have been in keeping with this place.

So they were all pleading with us to do this, and we did it. Those cries didn't fall on deaf ears. In fact, all three political parties and their representatives and those who wanted to be representatives listened very carefully and promised to do the same thing.

I point that out because this is really too strict a paradox. Think about this: to demand from others certain actions, which you concur with, and then criticize, even condemn, them for doing what you claim you would have done all along. It's no wonder the people of Ontario, from time to time, just look at this place and shake their heads.

I've got to tell you, one of my daughters has been very active in professional and little theatre. She came here, and she watched the proceedings of the assembly, and—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Halton, come to order, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I've often said to her, Mr. Speaker, what my mom and dad said to me: that public service isn't an option, it's an obligation—and I have encouraged her to look at some things that she could do. I think somebody said there are two kinds of people in the

world—they must have known my mom: those who make a noise and those who make a difference. I've always encouraged our kids to make a difference.

She sat here for half a day. We then went to supper, and I asked her, "What do you think?" Do you know what she said? She said, "That place is village theatre for ugly people." That's what she said. She said, "You would no more get me to commit to being one of you people out there than walking backwards as far as"—so this place, she noted, and on a bad day, I note, has become somewhat dysfunctional, to say the least.

It wasn't always like this, by the way. I can remember working here back in 1975—

Interjection: I didn't know that.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes, I was the executive assistant to one of the House leaders here when my good friend Bill Davis was the Premier of the province. We know each other well, and we keep in touch occasionally. He's a fine fellow.

Those were the days, by the way, when there were giants in this House—sincerely, there were giants.

I looked at one of the pictures framed here, and it brought back some memories and a few tears. Frank Miller was great; Roy McMurtry, a Chief Justice; Robert Welch, who became a very good friend; Stephen Lewis, one of the most articulate human beings on the face of the planet; Ian Deans; a young Sean Conway—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you, the member from Halton.

There are a lot of discussions on the opposition side, and I would remind you again that when your member was speaking, the House was in total silence.

I would also say to the member from Halton again, I've asked you to come to order several times, and you continue shouting across the floor, so the next time will be a warning.

Minister.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: He's a good guy; I know him well. But thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Morty Shulman—do you remember Morty? We called him Morty Showman. He was great.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I could tell you some great stories too, like the time he brought the gun into the House to show how lax security was. Then he went out to his car and went to Jamaica, while everybody stewed.

Bob Nixon; my old friend Maggie Campbell; Elie Martel—God bless him. Did I mention the young Sean Conway? His oratorical splendour will never again be matched in this House, I can tell you. Jack Riddell, a former Minister of Agriculture, who to this day is held in great respect—why do I share those names, the giants? Well, I've got to tell you, when I look around this place today, I often get the sense that there aren't too many giants here anymore, I've got to tell you. I don't know where they've all gone.

Interjections.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Oh, there are giants here, but there don't seem to be as many of them—the giants who understood what it meant to be fair and decent and even-handed, who stood up for and defended the finest traditions of this place.

I remember a story—Gilles, you remember this too; sorry, Speaker, the member opposite may remember this as well—when the magnificent Stephen Lewis got up and he asked the Premier, Bill Davis, a question—true story; I'm not making this up. Bill Davis listened to the question, he rose slowly and he said—you've got to remember—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Point of order.

1740

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order, the member for Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I know the standing orders state that he must be speaking to the topic at hand. I'm not objecting to the history lesson, but I would ask, if the Minister of Agriculture is not going to speak to the issue at hand, maybe he would like to speak about the horse racing industry and what he's going to do to the farmers who are—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member to have a seat.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

I appreciate the member moving a point of order, but I'm trying to keep all of you quiet, so I can listen. I don't have a chance to put it together when I have people shouting at each other.

Minister.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my friend opposite for calling me to the account, because he's a responsible member of this House, and I always appreciate his sage advice.

Anyhow, the very loquacious Stephen Lewis got up and asked the Premier of the day a question. Bill Davis rose and he said this: "Stephen, that's a very good question. I wish I had a very good answer, but I don't. You give me a couple of days, and I'll get back to you with a very good answer," and he sat down. The Speaker then said, "Is there a supplemental?" He said, "No, Speaker, no supplemental. That's good enough for me."

That's how we used to work in this place. I remember it well.

If that were to happen today, dare I say it, do you know what would happen? Somebody might get up and say, "That minister should apologize and resign because he doesn't know his file." You wouldn't want to say, "I don't know, but I'll get back to you."

Anyhow, perhaps I'm wrong. Perhaps I'll be surprised. Perhaps we will show that we today still understand the concepts of fairness, decency and defending our finest traditions. I hope so. I pray so. Perhaps we will rise above the narrow divisions and the political pandering that reflect a much more shallow understanding of this place than our history would call us to recall.

We didn't have TVs then. We didn't have reporters in the House. We didn't have BlackBerrys. In fact, we didn't even have offices here. Four MPPs would share an office with one staff person. I was fortunate enough to be one of those staff people—great learning experience. I know it was a different time, but sometimes we can learn a lot from our history and we can use it as a springboard for a recollection of what's good and decent and proper and right. I think good, decent, proper and right people reside in the seats of all parties in this Legislative Assembly, then and now.

Speaker, let's be honest, or if the rules preclude us from using the word "honest"—we talked about the truth setting us free; let's be honest and truthful—then honestly, let's try our best to be fair, decent and perhaps even-handed. I'm not going to take my full 20 minutes. I don't believe for a moment in my heart of hearts, I simply don't, and I can't bring myself to believe in my heart of hearts that there's anyone in this House today who in their heart of hearts actually believes that the Minister of Energy, the member from London West, is in contempt of this place. It is my fervent hope that we will recall that good judgment is based on experience, and experience, invariably, on bad judgment; that all of us have fallen short in this place and in other parts of our lives; that we need to be refocused, radically refocused, on what's good and decent and fair and right, and what the people of Ontario want to see this place produce, and being about doing it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I just want to start off by letting the Minister of Agriculture know that there's at least one member, and I think many more on this side of the House, who do believe the minister is in contempt.

But I also agree that the House shouldn't be here, not just for the same reasons as the party opposite. The Liberals want to deny that they have done wrong by the hard-working taxpayer with their politically motivated decision to cancel the Oakville and Mississauga power plants, as well as by using every trick in the book to conceal documents that expose the truth.

For me, I don't even think we should be here as a historic example of the government's contempt of parliamentary privilege of one of our own members. It's embarrassing for this government that it has come to this, especially considering nothing like this has come before the Legislature for over a hundred years.

It's one thing to make what is likely going to be a billion-dollar mistake in Oakville, doubled by Mississauga, for ill-advised campaign decisions. It reflects badly on all policy-makers who have pledged to dedicate their activities for the service of all Ontarians.

That's why it's so shocking for me to discover amongst these documents that legal counsel was actually tasked by the Ministry of Energy to discover ways to justify the cancellation of these very plants. Specifically, a mad scramble amongst bureaucrats ensued to find justifications for the cancellation of the Mississauga plant. If there had actually been a legitimate reason, then bureau-

crats wouldn't spend days pitching creative excuses back and forth and evaluating the fallout of each. That was in the documents that you provided us with, by the way.

They needed a way to issue a directive that may result in the revocation of Greenfield South's licence to generate electricity. This would be made possible if the revocation could be connected to either "energy conservation, load management, energy efficiency, or the use of cleaner energy sources including alternative or renewable energy source."

Now, where have we heard each and every one of those excuses before, for the cancelled plants? That's right: Oakville and Mississauga. But perhaps the real reason is public misfeasance or abuse of public office. Squandering what will likely be billions in failed energy projects for political gain is an outright abuse of government power.

And guess what? The documents that weren't redacted or blacked out reveal that the Liberals were afraid of that, too. The Minister of Energy actually asked legal counsel for a "Coles Notes on tort of misfeasance in public office ... including defences." In other words, the minister wanted examples where a public office-holder had abused power, and the possible defences for those offences. That sounds pretty guilty to me, Speaker. But don't just take my word for it, when you have this half of the House over here saying the exact same thing.

I've listened for days upon days now to your eulogizing of your Minister of Energy by the Liberal colleagues. Apparently, they even acknowledge that his days as minister of this disastrous file may be numbered.

Here are some examples—I'll just give you a couple: "He's a good man," "a wonderful family man," "a decent man," "a man of integrity," "highly respected," "hard-working."

"The Minister of Energy is a man of honour. He is a minister who rolled up his sleeves and sat down, as he just announced, and got a deal in this matter. He has worked to protect the public interest..."

Wow. Now, if only that were the case and he actually worked to protect the public interest instead of protecting his party's reputation by covering up his past mistakes on his energy file.

For the amount of times that honour came up in his eulogizing, one has to think that his colleagues have been compensating for something, perhaps trading honour for partisan politics and a lust for power at the cost of billions to taxpayers.

1750

To be fair, these misgivings represent the McGuinty government as a whole—winning elections before serving Ontarians. Despite their kind words, they're still effectively throwing the current Minister of Energy under the bus. Where's the tow truck? They threw him under the bus for the actions of the former Minister of Energy and the campaign team—but then I remember that he is responsible now for the contempt of parliamentary privilege by obstructing committees from meetings and the access to thousands of documents. That is until he

finally submitted to overwhelming pressure to do the right thing and release some files this week—some files.

Unfortunately, doing the right thing, for a Liberal, seems to be a fairly elusive concept. So instead, our staff was buried in thousands of documents, of which a significant percentage were blank or redacted. You should be embarrassed by that—absolutely embarrassed.

Based on what we saw, it seemed that only the bureaucrats were working on the energy file. Incredibly, there was an extraordinarily little amount of communication that went on at the highest levels, the levels of responsibility of the ministers of the crown who are sitting right across from me now. Either there was a massive lapse in leadership, or more documents than we can imagine are still being hidden, maybe under that desk right over there.

One other massively apparent theme is that the deeper we delve into these files, the steeper the costs to the hard-working families of Ontario for these power plant cancellations and relocations. We know for sure that the amount taxpayers will be accountable for in the unrealized Oakville plant is in excess of \$450 million, probably more like—we're going to get up to around \$650 million. I suspect this is likely just the tip of the iceberg. A slide deck by the Ontario Power Authority indicates that the government will actually be "pleased" if the costs of this cancellation do not exceed \$1.2 billion. They should have redacted that one.

The jury is still out on the Mississauga plant total cost. We're still waiting for the Minister of Energy to do the honourable thing and present the outstanding documents. But if the government is proud of that \$1.2-billion number for Oakville, I'm guessing the same may go for Mississauga, and then we're talking about double.

So I ask my colleagues opposite: Was it worth it? Using your power to blow through billions of Ontarians' tax dollars to save your Mississauga and Oakville colleagues' seats? Or in other words, was it worth it to go from a minority government without the seats to a minority government with the seats? Oh, wait. Sorry, that's right; you haven't realized that you're a minority government yet. This is evidenced by your obstruction of committees altogether. Today we've already had motions, that have been shot down, for unanimous consent to strike committees to get government going again. You, my friends, are obstructing this Parliament.

Your redaction of documents, even your refusal to submit to the will of the majority in this Legislature to remove non-tax-neutral HST from home, heating and hydro bills—the will of the majority of Parliament—and creating an Ornge select committee—just two examples of where you do not respect this very Parliament. I see a pattern developing here. I think we all see a pattern developing here.

There are more interesting discoveries in the long and winding paper trail; for example, further flawed logic within the grossly mismanaged energy file, like solving one problem by creating another and another and another. This is not a rational way to mitigate the costs of damages caused to companies who had already invested in building these plants. Yet that is exactly what this

government intended to do with TransCanada Energy Ltd. after terminating the Oakville plant contract.

A draft directive from the Minister of Energy was discovered designating the Ontario Power Authority to negotiate with TCE and award the contract for the new Kitchener-Waterloo plant to potentially mitigate losses TCE incurred—by the way, that's where the power is needed, not in Lennox and not in Sarnia. This was to be combined with an implied pressure that litigation may disqualify TCE from future project RFPs. That's right. The Premier's office actually issued talking points on mediation with TCE, including, "You [TCE] have to know that it would be very difficult to win the [Kitchener-Waterloo] project," if litigation commences. Internal legal counsel, to the rescue again—with a prompt response saying that, "Nothing in our government RFP template rules ... outright that if you are in litigation you are precluded from bidding. In fact, you can't be disqualified from bidding just because you've sued the government."

So that didn't work. Neither does non-competitive bidding or sole-sourced tendering, as unequivocally it costs more.

To summarize, you blew it by cancelling the project well under construction. Let's be clear about that. You knew you were way on the hook for damages to TCE, potentially even for the extensive loss of future profits; thought about using some empty threats; then attempted to actually negotiate by sole-sourcing TCE for another plant at, again, our expense as taxpayers. But that didn't go so well. The settlement negotiations were "an unmitigated disaster," according to the documents from TCE's lawyers.

How all that wound up wasn't so clear because of the massive gaps within the documents, where apparently everyone agreed not to email each other until some kind of legal proceedings commenced half a year later. It would be funny, if it wasn't so sad.

It's exactly this type of flawed decision-making and mismanagement of the energy file that keeps costs soaring. Where does it leave us? By the way, when costs soar, who pays the bill? Taxpayers, the people who elected you; that's who. We're actually stuck with a government so intent on winning seats in elections that it will waste billions of taxpayers' dollars if it suits their needs and then use every trick in the book to obstruct parliamentary privilege to cover up their abuse of power—misfeasance.

The Liberal government has truly lost sight of the line between right and wrong and their sole purpose for existence: to serve Ontarians in this House.

They have the gall to stand here eulogizing the career of one of their own already and pointing the finger at those of us doing what they should have been doing all along, which is standing up for Ontarians.

As Canadians and Ontarians, we typically pride ourselves on accountability and transparency in government, but today, we disappoint our country and our province

and those who stood in this House before us over 100 years ago.

I'm not so sure about anyone else, but when I came into office, my goal was to uphold the democratic principles that make this province great and to serve the citizens in my riding of Barrie and, of course, all the citizens of Ontario as well. To me, if not for some of my colleagues, things like accountability, honesty, transparency and integrity actually matter. Yet, now, here we are, not debating new legislation that would help the people of Ontario but, instead, this matter of principle and privilege, which you don't seem to think is important, as evidenced by every speaker who gets up here today.

We are here because a cabinet minister of this government, for the first time ever in the history of this province, may be found in contempt by obstructing access to important documents that will hold the government accountable for several shady, politically motivated documents. And for what? So the Liberals can save face like they saved the four ridings that landed them in this mess in the first place.

By playing games with the assembly and, by extension, with all of Ontario in the name of self-promotion, this is proof that the Liberals—this government has lost its way and has forgotten why we're all here: To represent the best interests of the hard-working citizens of Ontario.

Our Speaker himself has said that the right to order the production of the documents is fundamental to and necessary for the proper functioning of this assembly. Refusing to do this in full, as I just mentioned, but it's worth mentioning again, would mark the first time in the history of Ontario that an Ontario cabinet minister would be found in contempt, and deservedly so.

The Liberals bought themselves time to figure out what to do with the Speaker's orders, but this is ridiculous. They're even going to these lengths to conceal these documents; that they're willing to break the law that we're all sworn to uphold. A little backwards, isn't it?

What's the cost of this evasiveness? Well, beyond the disgrace of our Legislature and yourselves, frankly, this comes at a high financial cost as well, at a time when Ontario is painfully hurting economically.

The last decade, under this current government, we've landed on a collision course with a \$30-billion deficit, a \$400-billion-plus debt, record unemployment. Despite receiving over \$3 billion in equalization payments, Ontario's deficit today is three times the size of all of the other provinces combined, nationwide.

Meanwhile, this government's spending is increasing rampantly, and 14 of the 24 ministries in the last austerity budget increased their budgets. This is the reality that this government fails to realize.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
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Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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of Ontario**

First Session, 40th Parliament

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**Official Report
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Monday 1 October 2012

Lundi 1^{er} octobre 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 October 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} octobre 2012

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resources on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity, if I may, to introduce a special guest from Thunder Bay. We have Dr. Brian Stevenson, president and vice-chancellor of Lakehead University, here with us today; also Debbie Comuzzi, the new vice-president of external relations, returned back to Thunder Bay—Debbie, great to have you here; and also Richard Longtin, manager of alumni relations at Lakehead University. There's a reception this evening, I think, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230. All members of the Legislature are invited to be there. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Newmarket—Aurora on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: I too would like to welcome special guests today: Effie Triantafilopoulos, Judy Tutty and Bill Parsons in the members' gallery. They're here from Mississauga South and they'll have an opportunity to hear the debate that is going on here today. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd also like to welcome the Lakehead delegation because we have a beautiful campus in Orillia, Ontario, and also my executive assistant Mary Silk from Orillia and my executive assistant from Queen's Park, Gaggan Gill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to welcome all the Liberal staffers back from the Liberal convention in Ottawa on the weekend.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Mississauga—Brampton South.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to introduce my page Sashin Narayan's parents from the great riding of Mississauga—Brampton South. Sunita Narayan and Cameron Narayan are in the public gallery. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As we all know, when we do points of order, sometimes they are not points of order, and sometimes they are humorous. We'll flow with that.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 27, 2012, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion by Mr. Leone arising from the Speaker's ruling of September 13, 2012.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Barrie has the floor.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you for the opportunity to summarize some of my comments from Thursday.

We're still here today debating this because the Liberals are intent in denying they have done wrong by the hard-working taxpayer with their politically motivated decision to cancel the Oakville and Mississauga power plants—as well as by using every trick in the book to conceal the very documents that would expose the truth. It's embarrassing for this government that it has come to this, especially considering nothing like this has been seen in this Legislature for over 100 years.

We have been able to confirm from the thousands of documents, many of them redacted, that a combined total for the Mississauga and Oakville seat-saver programs is at least \$650 million. Unfortunately, this is likely to be substantially more, with the government being "pleased" if the costs of this cancellation do not exceed \$1.2 billion for the Oakville plant. Likely, this will be the case for Mississauga as well, doubling the cost.

Despite extensive redacting, we were able to piece a few details together. The energy policy decisions came from a campaign team, as surreal as that sounds.

We also discovered extended correspondences from their internal legal counsel pitching creative scenarios about how these cancellations can be justified away, or rather, how the Liberals might be able to get away with it. For example, for Mississauga, the Minister of Energy could issue a directive that may result in the revocation of Greenfield South's licence to generate electricity, but only if it can be connected to either "energy conservation, load management, energy efficiency or the use of cleaner energy sources including alternative or renewable energy sources."

Anyone can conduct a most basic research project and plainly see the range of those excuses for each plant's cancellation. If there was one legitimate reason, we wouldn't see this range at all. I do think there was one legitimate reason, and that's exactly what legal counsel warned the Minister of Energy about: public misfeasance. If it talks like a duck, if it walks like a duck, it's a duck. That's Occam's razor.

Squandering what could potentially be billions in failed energy projects for political gain is outright abuse of government power. And guess what? The documents reveal that the Liberals were afraid of that, too. I remind you that documents reveal that the former Minister of Energy actually asked legal counsel for a Coles Notes on tort misfeasance in public office, including defences. In other words, the minister wanted examples where another public office holder abused power and the possible defenses for those very offences.

It is disappointing that we're still here debating the contempt of this government. It seems pretty clear to me that they have contempt for parliamentary privilege through the continuous obstruction and delayed access to these power plant documents in the first place, the obstruction of committees and the significantly redacted files received last week. This is all courtesy of our current Minister of Energy, or rather, the Liberal fall guy, an outstanding character. This is not to forget the dreadful decision-making that led us all here in the first place by the former Minister of Energy.

I conclude by asking my colleagues opposite again if using their power to blow through potentially billions of Ontarians' tax dollars to save our Oakville and Mississauga colleagues' seats was worth it. Was it worth it to go from a minority government without seats to a minority government with seats? And therein lies the crux of the problem. This government has not yet realized that this is a minority government. The government has power, and it's distinctly drawn at serving Ontarians, not winning elections. It has also refused to believe that in fact, it is in contempt of the member from Cambridge's parliamentary privilege.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Joe Dickson: When I was an altar boy, I could say the entire mass in Latin, but I had to rely on the initiative of the member from Mississauga—Streetsville as he said, "Audi alteram partem: Listen to the other side." I have a very strong feeling that's what all sides are now doing.

I congratulate members for being professional, for the transparent dialogue by all parties, and I can tell you that there are few exceptions.

As they are carrying on business in a professional manner, more orderly, it really reminds me of my days back on Ajax council and regional council. Because they were both televised, it would not be uncommon, on an ongoing basis, to have residents stop me in the street and say what a professional group of people the council of that day was and compliment me. I would in turn say to them that it's the entire body that makes it happen in a professional manner. In this Legislature, there is dialogue that is much improved. There is a level of congeniality, and I congratulate all three parties.

In referencing the power generation, we have to remember that OPG, Ontario Power Generation, is next door to me in my riding and many ridings throughout Durham, commencing with Ajax—Pickering, Whitby—

Oshawa, the riding of Durham itself and, of course, Haliburton. It's important to know that OPG has done a tremendous amount for our area and they're very significant—and pleased with the province's settlement with TransCanada Energy related to the cancellation of the Oakville plant. There are many things that will progress by that, and OPG will progress with the procurement analysis of their new nuclear project at Darlington. We continue to pursue this and other opportunities in Durham region.

All of my colleagues, regardless of affiliation, are wholeheartedly behind the Darlington project. We're anxious to see it go forward. Quite frankly, there has been an easing of the energy needs in this worldwide economy. It has slowed down the process, but Darlington needs to be continuing in their ongoing process, to proceed. All members of Durham, regardless of their affiliation, are wholeheartedly in concurrence with this. We come from one common bond, and that is to progress in Durham through energy.

When I talk about the plants, I'd like to start at the top, and that's with some comments from the Premier of Ontario, our leader of government, an upfront gentleman who stands up and says it like it is. Some of the items that he indicated were that when our government announced we were relocating a gas plant from Oakville to eastern Ontario, the total cost of the relocation would be \$40 million. "This follows another settlement to move a natural gas plant from Mississauga to Sarnia. The cost of that relocation was \$190 million.

"We believe in accountability to those we serve and we take full responsibility for decisions we make. Here's why we made the decision to relocate these two gas plants.

"Since 2003, we've rebuilt our electrical system. We've added 10,000 megawatts of new, clean generation, including six new gas plants, and 5,000 kilometres of transmission lines.

"That represents almost \$30 billion in investments from the public and private sectors and is creating tens of thousands of jobs.

"We made a commitment to Ontarians to close coal-fired generation, a North American first. Burning coal is a leading cause of smog. It contributes to climate change. Particulate matter from coal can penetrate deep into the lungs and it can cause premature death.

"Since 2003, coal generation is down 90%"—I repeat: 90%—"with a corresponding 93% decrease in harmful sulphur emissions.

"As we moved away from coal and renewed the system, we had to make sure our homes and businesses would have the energy they need. Demand is especially high in the GTA," of which Durham is a part, "so we planned these natural gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga.

"With time and the hard work of Ontarians, Ontario's ... future became more certain. It was beginning to look like the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga might not

be as critical to our energy plans as we had previously thought.

"At the same time, opposition to locating gas plants in these communities was significant," in some areas. "We listened carefully to the community," which we were elected to do. "And we looked at the security of our energy supply and concluded that these plants could be located elsewhere...."

"It is worth noting that both opposition parties," as well as the government, "promised to cancel the Mississauga plant. They agreed with our decision. They understood there would be a cost to this." I think that's worth repeating: Both opposition parties and the government indicated they would make those cancellations. Those other than the government agreed with our decision, and they understood there would be a cost.

"In Ontario, we're renewing 80% of our electricity system. This is a massive undertaking. It's impossible to do it perfectly. But we're working as hard as we can to get it right. We're getting some great results.

"We all have cleaner air to breathe. In the summer of 2005, there were 48 smog days in the GTA. Last summer, there were only 12. This means kids with asthma can spend more time outside and seniors are at less risk of being hospitalized.

"On top of cleaner air, we have more clean energy jobs—20,000 so far and" well "on our way to 50,000. And homes and businesses have as much power as they need."

Going back to cleaner air, and that this means children with asthma can spend more time outside, I can tell you first-hand that three of my nephews, now middle-aged men who live in the east end of Durham, all had serious asthma problems as infants and as they grew up. But at middle age, the oldest one came to me and said, "Uncle Joe, what's this difference? What's going on? Why haven't you really emphasized it to the public?" I indicated to him, first of all, how pleased I was that his health had improved so much, but that we are focused on doing a good job and not focused on telling a good story. Perhaps we should have been.

Changes go on, and I'd like to just touch on a couple of questions that seem to be arising from the USB—universal serial bus—that's been used for producing the files, some 36,000 pages. There was some concern about either blank pages or copying a two-sided sheet or some parts of text missing. I asked the IT lead person at my firm's multi-manufacturing graphic department, and he said, "Although you have the potential, it could be a programming glitch. You should really deal with an IT expert." I think anybody who is making statements should have done that in advance.

Some of the answers can be a laser copier sending through double copies. We have some expensive equipment, and if there's static in the paper that will certainly happen, although I don't see that as a regular occurrence. However, if the subject file has text on one side and is blank on the other side, then that's what will be copied, one side with text and one side that's blank. Again, that's

common procedure. It's not unusual, if you're copying both sides of a page, that both sides would be copied.

If sections are missing, is the public aware that the government may only copy what was asked for, leaving blank areas because it was information pertaining to other items on another agenda? That makes sense to me.

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Again, my staff person, my number one person in the office who oversees the IT department, said, "Take it to an IT expert, because I cannot give you a professional comment on that. Check the programming for glitches. Again, take it to an expert."

When I took an opportunity to speak to some of the members in the Mississauga-Oakville areas, I found it quite interesting in that it was not really an issue, except in a couple of candidates' areas where there were some questions. Other than that, they hadn't really heard anything at the door.

I can say that it could have made a difference of 500, 1,000, 1,500 votes. Who knows in these situations? I certainly don't and wouldn't want to put a figure to that. But I can tell you that in Mississauga South our incumbent government member had a 6,000 majority, with a 51% plurality vote of all parties combined. When you go to places like Etobicoke Centre, it was 8,000, with 51% to 52%; Oakville, almost 4,600 votes, or 48% plurality; Mississauga-Erindale, some 4,300 plurality, with 45% of the total vote; and it went on through Mississauga East-Cooksville at 4,200; Mississauga-Brampton South, some 5,000 plurality; and in Mississauga-Streetsville, almost an 8,000-vote spread. That's 51.5% of the vote, compared.

I'd like to take a moment, if I could, Mr. Speaker—I don't want to run shy on time here, but I would like to just make a couple of comments in reference to the Minister of Energy, the former Attorney General, Minister Bentley, and what he's meant to our riding, and I hope I'm speaking for all of my members throughout Durham.

Mr. Michael Harris: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member, take a seat, please. Point of order from the member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: For the last six weeks, the Liberal House leader has refused to restrike the standing committees of the Legislature. Therefore, I seek unanimous consent to reconstitute the standing committees—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't think that's an appropriate point of order.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Throughout Durham, he has been a very common—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I suspected, there is a timeliness for putting these types of questions and this point of order. So I am going to ask that we refrain from doing so. When this debate is finished, the member then could appropriately put that question to the House.

I'll recognize the member from Ajax-Pickering to continue.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Mr. Speaker, also on a point of order: When a situation like this occurs, could you please stop the clock? Is that a possibility? I just leave that for your decision, sir.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That would be my prerogative, and I will keep that in mind as you continue.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

We have a distinguished lawyer, a gentleman who commenced classes and has assisted students, who has dealt with requests to turn over records on relocating the plants after the negotiations. I can tell you, as a distinguished lawyer, he went one step above and beyond his own personal expertise and sought legal expertise by commercial experts. That is because negotiations on closure of a building could be jeopardized with higher taxpayer costs if the files were made public before negotiations were completed. That's ongoing business and professional standards and safety measures, as we all know. Certainly, I do that as a business person on an ongoing basis. Files would be turned over at the end of the negotiations, and indeed they were turned over at the end of negotiations.

I can tell you, if it was the construction of the Durham Regional Courthouse, most of my fellow colleagues from Durham were there and were front and centre. I congratulate the minister for his efforts in that. At that time, the Ontario Attorney General, Mr. Bentley, was out for Durham Regional Police Services on many occasions and brought grants for Durham police to fight against child pornography and computer fraud; that's extra police money that was not there before.

I ask you to keep in mind a couple of terms: the term "confidentiality" and the term "non-disclosure."

In the summer of 2011, the minister gave Durham Regional Police Services some \$115,000 through Ontario's civil remedies grant program, which enables money illegally acquired to be redistributed by police services to victims of crime. Out and out, it was the second grant in two years the Durham police have received from the Attorney General—all very, very positive.

As the minister in his current portfolio, he has hosted many events in our area, a sellout at the board of trade as he brought forward new information. Minister Bentley has visited Veridian, which is the largest power assembler in that part of Ontario, to discuss the province's smart grid and its increasing intelligence and indicate some joint ventures.

One of the last ones that the minister spoke at was the Durham Strategic Energy Alliance held at the Ajax Convention Centre. It was a sellout. One of the items on the agenda was the Darlington new build, and that's something both I and my fellow colleagues want to see go forward.

I have a short thank you note which actually I just received Friday, Mr. Speaker. I want to say this because it pertains to all members of the Legislature. The individual was dealing with an ailing parent who, unfortunately, passed away last week. They were looking for a nursing home. It was almost impossible to do. There was a location made available—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham—Kent—Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: With all due respect to our member from Ajax—Pickering, the motion is not with regard to a character testament to the minister. The motion is about contempt and I would ask that he address—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Actually, the motion isn't a motion about contempt, for that correction. I have been listening carefully to the member, and he has been successfully bringing his points to the motions that we are talking about, so I will ask the member to continue.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Because I'm losing so much time with some questions, Mr. Speaker, I'll condense it as much as I possibly can.

In the end, the gentleman's father passed away. He made very positive, sincere comments to what our office had done. He spoke to me personally, thanking me in correspondence. But I have to tell you, when something like that happens, I don't feel it's me; I feel it's every single member of the Legislature, because every single member of the Legislature works extremely hard. I added a handwritten note that said, "I know all members of the Legislature regardless of party are dedicated individuals who work hard every day" for their residents.

There's a couple of things I would like to say. I won't be able to support this motion as it's currently written. I think there are some political games being played, and I don't want to see this gentleman have his integrity dishonoured.

The amendment and sub-amendment don't in any way make the motion more palatable. They seem to be tweaks. They're not making substantive changes, and I believe that's what an amendment must do. The government has informed the Speaker and the House that we intend to move a substantive amendment, an amendment that would make the motion more acceptable.

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I know we're debating the sub-amendment right now, Mr. Speaker, but I must say I wish I could get on with dealing with more substantive changes to the motion. I believe more substantive changes would improve this motion and, hopefully, allow us to get on with the important business that the people of Ontario are counting on us to move forward with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you sincerely, fellow members.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, on a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order.

Mr. Michael Harris: My apologies to the member from Ajax—Pickering too, for interrupting him before.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to reconstitute all the standing committees immediately, with the existing committee structures as they existed on September 9, 2012, and that said committees be reconstituted until at least August 31, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener—Conestoga is seeking unanimous consent. Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise today in support of the motion before the House, tabled by my colleague the member from Cambridge, to hold the Minister of Energy in contempt of the Ontario Legislature.

This motion came about as a result of the ruling of the Speaker on September 13 that a prima facie breach of privilege had occurred, and ordered the Minister of Energy to turn over all documents by 6 p.m. last Monday, September 24.

In his ruling, the Speaker made some very astute observations—I'm complimenting you: "The House has never set a limit on its power to order the production of papers and records."

He also said, "The Standing Committee on Estimates was unquestionably entitled to request the documents sought from the Minister of Energy...." You can't get much clearer than that.

On the day of the Speaker's ruling, the Minister of Energy spoke to the media and stated that he would comply with the Speaker's ruling. However, in the days that followed, the Premier was expressing caution about what documents would actually be turned over. Meetings were held with the House leaders to arrange for the turning over of these documents. Unfortunately, that was a futile exercise.

The government House leader has tried to blame the opposition House leaders for being inflexible in negotiating the turning over of the documents. The truth is that the government House leader was trying to wiggle out of strict adherence to the ruling of the Speaker. He tried to negotiate conditions about how the documents would actually be turned over, including maintaining an element of secrecy. That simply is not acceptable to the PC caucus. It was not what the Standing Committee on Estimates had asked for. It was not what the Speaker had ordered in his ruling.

The government finally announced that they would turn over all requested documents as per the Speaker's ruling. However, it dragged out to almost the eleventh hour. Last Monday morning, the government House leader stood in the Legislature and trumpeted the fact that the government would be turning over all of the documents by noon that day, six hours earlier than the Speaker's imposed deadline. Wow, that's very proactive and responsive.

Anyway, the Minister of Energy even announced that the cancellation of the Oakville plant would only cost \$40 million, and that was a great deal for taxpayers. You gotta be kidding me.

In an Ontario Power Generation briefing for the then Minister of Energy in February 2010, it was stated: "The cost the supplier has incurred to date might be as much as \$100 million. The supplier has already ordered and paid for gas turbines."

In the same briefing, it was also pointed out to the minister: "The measure of damages that OPA would

likely be liable for would be the supplier's lost profits over the term of the contract, which would be quite a significant amount of money.

"With \$1 billion invested at a return of 8% or 9%, damages would be in the neighbourhood of \$80 million to \$90 million plus, for the cost for the already-purchased gas turbines."

How in the world can the Minister of Energy stand up in the House and talk about a figure of \$40 million and brag it was a great deal? The cost of the Oakville cancellation could be as high as \$450 million, if not greater. Based on a cursory review of the documents, this could include \$210 million for gas turbines; the \$40 million in unrecoverable costs, as bragged about by the Minister of Energy; and \$200 million for transmission lines. So how does \$450 million become \$40 million in the Minister of Energy's mind? I know it's been a long time since I've been in a math classroom, and I'm not sure of the current curriculum produced by the Minister of Education in teaching these days, but that doesn't make sense.

Last Monday, 36,000 documents showed up an hour late. Teams of staff members pored over a portion of the documents until well into the wee hours of the morning, and they're continuing to.

It quickly became evident that hundreds, if not thousands, of pages were missing and others were redacted or whited out or blacked out. For example, no documents whatsoever were produced which were authored by the Minister of Energy or any of his staff. So does the minister expect us to believe that, being the minister responsible for this file and overseeing the cancellation of these plants, he never wrote or signed a single document or letter to anyone or any organization? It absolutely makes no sense.

There are also time gaps within the documents provided. It also appears that information has been redacted prior to turning the documents over. Now, I know that the member from Ajax-Pickering just said it could be an IT problem—I mean, redacted—but, really, is it an IT problem? I don't think so.

Interjection: It's quite a problem.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's quite a big problem. That is the problem.

Anyway, this latter point was illustrated very effectively by the member from Nipissing in his comments in the House last Tuesday. He cited example after example of documents with large portions of information whited out. He even held them up for everyone to see, in case the Liberal government wasn't believing us. He gave countless examples of letters, documents and presentations which included page after page after page that were entirely blank. There might be a salutation and a "hope to see you in the morning" type of thing. Everything in the middle was gone.

In the sample of documents which researchers were able to review within the time frame, the member from Nipissing found nearly 1,000 blank pages. This is absolutely shameful. How can the government House leader stand up in this House with a straight face and tell us the

Ministry of Energy has provided all the requested documents? Again, unbelievable.

After all this and after the Speaker's ruling on September 13, we still don't have all the necessary information. The Minister of Energy has sealed his fate. He is unquestionably in contempt of this House.

A contempt motion, like the one we are debating, is not something to be taken lightly. It is an incredibly serious matter. You only have to look at the rarity of an action of this magnitude in Canadian and Ontario history. The last time something comparable to this occurred in the Ontario Legislature was 104 years ago, so we are all witnessing an historic event.

In our parliamentary system of government, contempt of Parliament is the most serious thing that a member of government or a government can face. It is a condemnation by his peers, by all of us. It is a statement of condemnation that the actions, in this case by the Minister of Energy, violated the fundamental rights of Parliament, which are essential to the workings of a democratic society.

Mr. Speaker, this has almost become tragic. There was no need for things to get this far. The minister had ample opportunity to deal with this issue in a constructive and respectful manner. He could have responded quickly and completely to the legitimate request of the Standing Committee on Estimates. The committee had a legal right to review all documents pertaining to the cancellation of these power plants and what that means for Ontario taxpayers.

Let's just take a few minutes to review the chronology of how we got to this regrettable point. In October 2010, the McGuinty government announced that it would be cancelling a gas-fired energy plant project to be built in Oakville. At the time, and until last week, no details were provided by the Ministry of Energy or the McGuinty government as to the financial repercussions of this announcement.

On September 24 of last year, during the waning days of the 2011 general election, the government announced that it would not be proceeding with the Mississauga gas-fired plant, which was already under way. This decision was made for purely political reasons, and we're not even sure it was actually made by the government.

The Minister of Finance stated on July 19, at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Estimates, "This was a campaign undertaking ... at a time when I think we were still behind in the polls, so it required a government decision, which occurred after the election."

So, basically, the Liberal Party high command made a decision which required a rubber-stamp approval by the real government.

On May 9, the Minister of Energy also appeared before the standing committee. During his testimony, he was asked various questions pertaining to the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga power plants. It would be a gross understatement to say that the minister was less than forthcoming. After repeated direct questions from my colleague the member from Nipissing,

who is our energy critic, about the cost of cancelling the Oakville plant and whether any interim payments had been made, the minister repeatedly refused to provide direct answers. He continued to cite the confidential and sensitive nature of the information as his reason for not providing the answers requested by the members of the committee.

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When the minister was pressed by the member from Nipissing on the cancellation of the Mississauga plant, he continued to stonewall. He would not provide any direct answers to questions posed to him regarding the cost of the cancellation or the details of penalty clauses in the contract. However, he did provide one rather enlightening statement. When asked when he was advised that the Mississauga plant would not proceed, he admitted to the committee that he first heard of the cancellation on September 24, 2011, during the heat of the provincial election campaign, when he read about it in the newspaper. Unbelievable. How could a senior minister of the crown, Attorney General at the time, not be included in the decision-making process of such a far-reaching decision? That in itself is unbelievable.

Perhaps it makes it a little easier to understand why the Premier was so quick to hang this particular minister out to dry by ordering him to ignore the requests of the Standing Committee on Estimates and face a charge of contempt with the ensuing legal consequences. This government's obsession with secrecy and withholding of information to expediently serve its own political purposes could well cost the Minister of Energy his political career and possibly even his licence to practise law. I guess someone has to be the scapegoat. It might as well—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville on a point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, this is going way over the top in allegations against a minister of the crown who has signed an affidavit claiming that he has turned over every piece of paper pertinent to this.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Having a seat is one thing, but stopping talking when I'm standing is also another part of it. That's not a point of order.

Member, proceed.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's unfortunate the Minister of Energy is so little thought of by the Premier and the Liberal Party high command that he read about this major and controversial decision in the media. So yes, I think there is a bus involved and he's under the tire of it.

Basically, the Minister of Energy has become cannon fodder for the Premier. I can't even say that he is collateral damage, because he wilfully played an active role in the obstruction. He could have stood up to his boss and said that what he was being asked to do was—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Mississauga—Streetsville on a point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, if there was any doubt, it is now removed. The member has stated, in her own words, that a minister of the crown wilfully played a part and made an allegation that is without substance and merit. That is, in fact, making an allegation against a member. That is a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order. I would ask all of us to stick to the intent of the motion and use as much restraint from raising the bar of anger as possible, and to keep the tone based on the motion. I appreciate the members to do that.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Energy, when asked by the committee, should have been allowed—and it was the Premier who was withholding him from producing the documents, which we all know and which you have ruled should be produced. Not thousands—I think I heard we're up to 2,000 pages as we go through them that are basically whited out.

The cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville power plants was done for one reason and one reason only, and that was admitted by the Minister of Finance. At that point in the campaign, the Liberal high command realized that they were in a potentially precarious situation with regard to the Liberal-held seats that would be impacted by the building of the Mississauga power plant. The Liberal Party high command wanted to save those Liberal seats that otherwise might have been in jeopardy. So without even proper consultation with senior cabinet ministers—we already have the former Minister of Energy saying he read about it in the paper—the high command threw a Hail Mary pass and announced that the Mississauga plant would not proceed.

I can still remember the television stations sending camera crews in the days and weeks that followed, documenting the fact that the construction was continuing full bore despite the announcement. You could see the workers being interviewed as they were driving their big trucks into the plant. The communication on this important decision was abysmal, both internally and externally.

Unfortunately for Ontario and the taxpayers of this province, the Liberal campaign's Hail Mary pass actually worked this time. Unfortunately, the Liberal high command did end up saving five Liberal seats. Talk about a seat-saver special. The Premier has just said, I believe, in comments, "Well, that's just the price of doing politics." That's just absolutely unacceptable.

It is not without precedent with the McGuinty government, though. We all know the turmoil which the Minister of Energy has created across rural Ontario with his ideologically driven commitment to proliferation of industrial wind turbines across rural Ontario. Residents, farmers, municipalities and community groups across the province have said loudly and clearly that they do not want turbines next to residential areas and schools. The people of rural Ontario have repeatedly called on this government to announce a moratorium on further wind turbines, at least until proper health studies are com-

pleted. However, those pleas have fallen on deaf ears. Green is good in their eyes—if you can call it green—and damn the torpedoes.

Could it possibly be more than just a coincidence that most of these rural seats are held by the opposition? Could this government really be that callous and cynical? That's a rhetorical question to which we all know the answer. Of course they are that callous and cynical.

When a number of industrial wind turbines were being proposed along the shores of Lake Ontario off Scarborough, there was a similar hue and cry on the part of the residents. The difference was, in that case the five Scarborough ridings that were fighting the project were all held by Liberals. The McGuinty government and the Liberal high command knew that the five seats would be in jeopardy if those wind turbines were to be constructed. As a result, the project was shelved and five more Liberal seats were saved. Seat-saving specials seem to be a standard part of this government's operating procedure. Yes. So, really, what happened in Mississauga should come as no surprise. This government has a track record of making blatantly politically motivated decisions, regardless of the cost to taxpayers. Their actions are then followed by a code of silence.

What was that famous line from *The Godfather*? "It isn't personal; it's just business." Well, it is personal. It's our tax dollars, our sensibilities that are being usurped. It's very personal for all Ontarians. As depressing and shocking as all of this is, we should take consolation that as a result of what has come to light over the past few months, combined with the scandals and the mismanagement we have seen at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ontarians are now realizing what this Liberal government is doing running the province. I hope that next time—

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes—they'll have complete faith, and totally convinced that they won't make the same mistake next time.

I was out doing a radiothon for my local hospital on the Friday, and they were just like, "All this money, up to \$650 million, for these two power plants—do you know how much health care that could have bought?" That was the number one thing that they asked on the radiothon. They're paying attention. Yes. And they mentioned many more scandals than the \$650 million. They went to eHealth. They went to Ornge. They said, "We're struggling to get adequate health care—especially rural Ontario, which has its challenges—and yet we see all this blatant disregard for taxpayer money, wilfully squandered by this government."

So the work of the Standing Committee on Estimates was clearly obstructed by the Ministry of Energy's continued refusal to provide all the relevant documents, which have been requested by committee.

We're still anxiously awaiting any committees to be struck because they haven't been in operation since September 10. The government says we're blocking all the good work that they're trying to do. Well, they

haven't struck the committees. There are about 30 pieces of legislation that are stalled. They're the ones holding up striking the committees. We want to get this place functioning. We want this to go to the committee on finance so we can ask further questions, because thousands of pages of whited-out documents are not helping us get down to the bottom of the question.

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We have a responsibility, in opposition, to make sure that this government is kept in line and taxpayers' money is spent wisely. When they yell at us that they didn't do anything wrong, that is absolutely not true. They are not providing the information that we as parliamentarians have the right to know, that the taxpayers have the right to know.

When this government goes on and on that it's all our fault and we're blocking their work, we all know that that is not accurate. The committees have not been struck. We still don't have all the answers to the \$650 million that the cancellation of these two power plants will cost—

Interjection: More to come too.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —and more to come, as we say.

I certainly support and praise the member from Cambridge for bringing this contempt motion before the Legislature—and the Speaker's ruling—so that we can have an open debate and the taxpayers of Ontario, hopefully, eventually will get some answers from this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to recognize the Liberals for using the Hugo Chávez method of voting at their convention this weekend in order to get—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask for your order, please. Not helpful.

Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I rise in this House with disappointment that we find ourselves here today to discuss this motion. While I'm disappointed by the need to speak to this motion of contempt, I am proud to add my voice to those that support my colleague Mr. Bentley, a fine parliamentarian and a thoroughly capable minister.

I must say that I cannot support this motion as currently written. The opposition is playing political games and looking to dishonour a man of integrity. The amendment and sub-amendment don't in any way make the motion more palatable. They are just tweaks to the date; they don't make substantive changes. The government has informed the Speaker and the House that we intend to move a substantive amendment, an amendment that would make the motion more acceptable.

I know we're debating the sub-amendment right now, but I must say that I wish we could get on with dealing with more substantive changes to the motion. I believe more substantive changes would improve this motion and, hopefully, allow us to get on with the important business that the people of Ontario are counting on us to move forward with.

I wish to offer my respect, as well, to Colin Andersen, the chief executive officer of the Ontario Power Authority, whose integrity is being called into question by association with this motion of contempt.

What bothers me perhaps the most about why we find ourselves here today is the thinly veiled—if veiled at all—hyperpartisanship behind the contempt motion filed by the member for Cambridge. It has been said in this House, and I will say it again for the record, that members from both opposition parties made it clear, both in this House and in correspondence to the energy minister, that they opposed both the Mississauga and the Oakville gas plants. That sounds like consensus to me. I caution the opposition from accusing us of actions for partisan gain. We all know that the reason we are here today isn't really about the relocation of the power plant, and it isn't really about the cost to move it. What we are doing in this House today does not in any way benefit Ontarians or save them money.

The honourable member from Mississauga South told this House last week that his community was concerned about the particulate matter in the airshed. When the community came together to voice their concerns, the government of the day listened. In fact, in 2000 the Ministry of the Environment commissioned a Clarkson airshed study. These are from his report, and I found it very good information the other day. Results from that study were released between 2006 and 2008 and confirmed that the airshed was stressed.

The community took the next step. They gave of their own volunteer time to participate in the Clarkson airshed advisory committee. They pushed for a task force to examine the problems and provide the solutions.

Our government listened and formed the Southwest GTA Air Quality Task Force, under the leadership of Dr. David Balsillie, in 2009. They produced a report to the Minister of the Environment in 2010. The report made it clear that the local airshed was already stressed. It noted the need to think about the cumulative impact of multiple emitters. It reinforced local concerns about introducing new emitters to the airshed. This led the community to become the site for a new pilot project that would help model a national air quality management system.

Torontonians have supported getting out of coal and Torontonians have been very much involved with air quality and the closing of the coal-fired plants, so this was very important to them.

Through years of effort, science on their side and the recommendations of experts in hand, the people of Mississauga and Oakville worked hard to protect their local air quality, and they made great progress. As the member from Mississauga said last week, it was truly a

community effort, supported by several great local leaders, like Mississauga mayor Hazel McCallion; former ward 1 councillor Carmen Corbasson; current ward 1 councillor Jim Tovey; ward 2 councillor Pat Mullin; Oakville mayor Rob Burton—so the political side was firmly behind this. The community was united. City council was united, including all other councillors like Prentice, Dale, Adams, Parrish, Iannicca, Mahoney, Saito, McFadden and George Carlson.

Even so, electricity planners were saying that local demand for power was growing, citing and remembering the blackouts that occurred years earlier. The previous government knew this all too well. They had done little to secure the integrity of the grid. That's why the former PC government approved the environmental assessment to site a gas-fired power plant in Clarkson in the southwest corner of Mississauga, next to Oakville. But our government was always looking at ways to ensure that we had the generation capacity we needed, especially when we also wanted to stop burning dirty coal. Minister Sousa reminded this House of the Lakeview coal plant, which was on our waterfront for decades. It was the worst polluter in the GTA. The community rejoiced when our government tore it down.

This government decision, which is at the centre of this debate, was even supported by the leader of the PCs, Tim Hudak. I quote now Mr. Ted Chudleigh, the member from Halton: "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them." In the *Globe and Mail*, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Hudak, said, "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga." Now, they're against the government decision.

During the campaign, the Ontario Liberal Party made a commitment that, if re-elected, the government would relocate the Mississauga facility to another location. The community was very pleased. After years of hard work, one of the parties had clearly been listening and had taken their concerns seriously.

But the question remained: Where did the other two parties stand? They responded to our announcement by saying that they too would make the same commitment. The *Globe and Mail* cites Mr. Hudak: "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga." Having finally been awoken to this issue, the PC candidate in Scarborough—Agincourt even went further when he told the *Mississauga News*, "Only Conservative leader Tim Hudak will cancel the Eastern Power gas plant slated to be built on Loreland Avenue." The Leader of the Opposition went to Mississauga to talk about how they would cancel the power plant.

This was well covered the other day by the member for Mississauga South. He went into all the details of it. There was agreement at the political level that the people of Mississauga and Oakville had supported air quality all along and that there would be extra stresses on the air quality in their region—highly urbanized—whether it's from cars, trucks, energy producers or industries. These urban airsheds do get stressed, and this was the case, and the science was what they were using.

They even robocalled the people of Sherway to tell them that only the Hudak PCs would cancel the power plant. They were asking the people of Mississauga to vote for them so they could cancel the power plants themselves.

This twisting and turning by the PC Party was clearly seen in the community for what it was: a last-ditch attempt to do anything, say anything to try to win a seat. After six years and half of an election campaign of silence, the people of Mississauga were not fooled by this sudden conversion.

Shortly after being re-elected, our government announced the relocation of the Mississauga facility, as promised. We listened to the community. Following through on the commitment made by all three parties, OPA and the proponent reached a deal to relocate the plant.

Despite the facts, despite the context, despite what has been said on this matter by members of all sides of the House—it doesn't get more partisan than that.

Let's look at the facts of the matter we have before us: The Tories asked for documents, and we made the case—a strong case—that providing those documents would compromise our ability to negotiate with TCE. This occurred at the public accounts committee, but it was more in the estimates committee. We went through this in the public accounts committee, and the member for Willowdale spent considerable time speaking to the issue: that these were commercial discussions going on, that these were huge teams on each side, that there was a real reason not to give those documents forward. There was support from the Auditor General as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It being 11:30, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1131 to 1300.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order for the member from Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise today to wish Angela Whitehouse a happy and healthy 70th birthday. As she relaxes with family and friends and reflects on life's many blessings, my wish for her is that she can have many more rewards to come. Happy birthday, Angela.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Very short and brief; thank you. It's not a point of order, but I think we'll accept that.

A point of order, the member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to rise today and congratulate Dr. Peter Zakarow on his 80th birthday. He is a very active jogger—and physical fitness. He keeps current in events locally, municipally, provincially and federally. I wish him and Marianne a healthy and happy 80th birthday, and all of the year long.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay on what I suspect would be a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes. I just want, again, to welcome back the Liberal staff from the Liberal convention, being back on Monday; it's great to see them back.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I was doing my best to avoid that.

Having said that, the member from Ottawa—Orléans has the floor.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker, and to the member from James Bay—wherever, thank you. We're happy to be back.

We were talking about the minister's appearance before the estimates committee when I left. I think I was just about to quote the member from Beaches—East York on what he said about the estimates committee and the minister answering questions during the very tough negotiations between our government, the OPA and the TCE:

"The minister has the right to decline either giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during his answering of the questions....

"I would advise that I'm going to allow the motion to proceed, but I would also advise—and I think the minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and I would expect him to do so. That would be my ruling."

That was something that's been said in here quite often, and it deserves repeating. The Minister of Energy attempted and did strike an effective balance between the committee's authority to ask those questions and request those documents and the need to protect the public interest in the midst of highly sensitive commercial negotiations and litigations.

Mr. Speaker, as elected officials, we must balance the supremacy of Parliament with the public interest. Our government did just that.

We can talk about how best this issue is resolved for Ontarians, about public interest, and I commend you, Mr. Speaker, for following the precedent set by your federal counterpart—the three House leaders to meet and come to an agreement to achieve a solution in the best interest of Ontarians—without breaching privilege, without compromising negotiations and without risking further cost to Ontarians in a decision that had already been taken. In your words, Mr. Speaker, "I ask that the three House leaders take it upon themselves to find a path that can satisfy the requests of the estimates committee."

In my view, our House leader met in good faith. We offered paths; we came to the table with solutions and were open to suggestions on how to proceed. We were met only with demands, and in my opinion, it was not in the interest of Ontarians that the opposition refused our suggestions, refused to offer counter-ideas, ignored the consequences of their demands and may have had the taxpayers of this province paying a little more as a result of not being able to reach agreement. The negotiations, of course, had to be brought to an end and the documents delivered, the 36,000 pages of documents that complied with the requests of you, Mr. Speaker.

We followed through, yet they admit that though we stand here and debate the supposed contents of these documents, smearing the minister with contempt, they are hypothesizing what may or may not be contained in the documents received. These are truly low standards

that they have set for themselves as parliamentarians. They seem to enjoy the wallowing of unfairness as they feel they have the votes to unjustly try to destroy an excellent lawyer, an excellent MPP and excellent minister.

There was never the intent to withhold the information beyond the time negotiations were complete. With the other plant and the completion of negotiations, the full cost of the cancellation was made public. Our government took full responsibility.

The minister said time and time again that, once negotiations were complete for the Oakville gas plant, he would make all the information available, and I question as to why the opposition refused to wait.

What we are speaking about here is not whether or not the minister is guilty of contempt of Parliament because he has met the requirements as established by the Speaker by delivering all the documents—36,000 pages—but whether this Parliament can be used by the two parties opposite to make this about something else. We shall see.

The level that we have taken the Legislature in in going after this minister is troubling to me. You have your documents. You received them on time as established by the Speaker. This should be at an end.

The presentation by the member for Mississauga South shows how and when the decision was made, but now we have to get to the other major considerations of this. I'd like to read something that was in the Mississauga newspaper, I believe. It's a recent article. It's from Scott Kletke, Lakeview Ratepayers Association. The title is "NIMBY Offends Us."

"Recent articles and editorials regarding the cancelled Greenfield generation plant in Mississauga have misrepresented the facts. This can't be ignored. If left to stand, they'll come to be accepted as truth.

"The initial proposal to build a new generation facility was opposed by the city of Mississauga, the area residents and all local provincial politicians. The only reason the project was allowed to proceed, after city council rejected the plan, was because the developers appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board, who then approved the project despite overwhelming opposition.

"The OMB is the root of the problem. The ability for one unelected OMB adjudicator to overturn municipal planning policies is outrageous. If the city's planning policy had been respected, it wouldn't have been necessary for the Liberal government to cancel the plant and incur the \$190-million price to move the plant."

That's a new issue. I hadn't heard that the OMB had got their nose in there and had further complicated that whole process, which was a long process.

The member from Scarborough—Agincourt came up with some information that I guess we all knew, but that was the history of the way some governments have gotten into difficulties. If you run a big business, that's part of the issue, part of the problem. The member from Scarborough—Agincourt clearly shows that the history of this Legislature abounds in decisions that were made and

were changed, and there were costs that followed to the taxpayers. That's unfortunate, but it happens.

She talked about, in 1991, that the NDP government "cancelled the Red Hill Creek Expressway. This proposed expressway is located in the region of Hamilton-Wentworth. For 25 years, the region has been trying to build this expressway. Only three months after the NDP took office, it cancelled the Red Hill Creek Expressway. This construction project was approved by a joint board decision in 1985." It goes on to say that, "The NDP government of the day spent \$70 million" when they cancelled that project. So that's just part of it.

The member for Scarborough-Agincourt also reminded the Legislature that, on July 11, 1995, in an interview with the Toronto Star, the former Chair of Management Board, the Honourable Dave Johnson, indicated the cancellation of the Eglinton and Sheppard lines in the city of Toronto, even though the government of the day had spent approximately \$260 million. The mayor of Toronto at the time, Mr. Lastman, commented that the building of the two additional subway lines would create 27,000 jobs. Hence, the former PC government not only failed to create jobs in the city of Toronto at the time, but had also failed the people of Toronto on public transit.

So we're not pleased that these gas plants were planned for a long time and they were cancelled, but the decision-making was based on scientific information which the people of Toronto demanded.

We know that the cost of closing coal was high. Coal, if you do not include the health costs, is a cheap energy source, but if you add in the mercury, arsenic, sulphates and the CO₂ contribution to our atmosphere and the huge contribution to climate change and the destruction of your environment, then coal is expensive indeed.

So we have constructed a lot of green power, and gas plants are part of that solution. But even with gas, these people in Oakville and Mississauga supported the province getting out of coal. They were also concerned with pollution from gas burning. There was concern that the airshed for Mississauga and other parts of Toronto would be impacted. The gas plants will operate for at least 50 years. So, once they were completed, the residents' air quality would be impacted for a very, very long time. So this decision, in the long term, is an excellent one.

1310

Urban air quality, as we know, is innately less clean because of all the transportation and industrial emitters in large cities. And the people were right, the opposition parties were right and moving the gas plant was right. It would have been much better if the planning phase had picked up the concerns of residents earlier, but as we've seen in the past, it is our citizens who we must protect, and air-quality concerns are very high on the people's list, and that is a welcome attribute to the people of Mississauga and Toronto, generally.

On air quality, we can never waver. As an engineer, a consulting engineer for 30 years and soon to be a 50-year member of Professional Engineers Ontario, I want to

address that matter as well. I believe we have to listen to the experts on this, and I acknowledge I am not one of them. We have dealt with why the gas plant was cancelled. We have dealt with the facts that all governments have made decisions that ended up with taxpayers' needless costs. In hindsight, the gas decisions to move should have been made much earlier. We have heard that, and the minister and our government have acknowledged that. What we are dealing with in this contempt motion is purely that he did not provide the documentation required in a timely fashion.

We have seen from the estimates committee and the public accounts committee that there were questions that the minister could not answer. He could not produce those documents as the province and OPA were in the midst of extremely detailed negotiations for the relocation of plants. What would be ongoing negotiations? Well, they were speaking about many millions of dollars. The teams on each side would have included several lawyers, accountants, energy planners, engineers, energy specialists, estimators and economists. These were large negotiating teams. The Auditor General knew how important and complex these negotiations were, the Chair of the estimates committee knew how important these documents were, yet committee members from both opposition parties took the position that we give the other side all our information during those negotiations.

There was concern by all—and I've not heard this fact, but my guess would be that as a result of the opposition parties forcing that early negotiation completion and the ability to release the documents, I would think that this cost the province of Ontario dollars. Did the opposition cost this process a great deal of money? I expect the negotiations could have been more successful if we had more time. So the minister delivered and met the Speaker's timeline, and this motion should be withdrawn. Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate. The member for—

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Stormont.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):—Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker. There's been much debate on this issue over the past few days, and I believe that it's time to review the issue for the people who may be watching this at home for the first time.

Why the regular proceedings of this House have been pre-empted: On August 27, fellow PC MPP Rob Leone asked the Speaker to rule on a point of order, citing that his parliamentary privilege had been breached by the Minister of Energy for refusing to follow a May 2012 order issued by the estimates committee compelling the minister to table all documents related to the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga power plants.

On September 13, Speaker, you returned your decision that the minister must release all documents by 6 p.m. on Monday, September 24, or risk being in contempt of this Legislature.

Members opposite have cited solicitor-client privilege and not being in the public interest as reasons why these documents should not be released. Mr. Speaker, you were very clear—crystal clear, in fact—that these were not acceptable reasons for failing to release documents to the committee, and that failure to do so would be a breach of privilege. The ruling reflects one of the basic principles of our democracy: the opposition's role to hold this government to task and to account, but the withholding of information from us hinders our ability to do so.

We of the Legislature—and I'm sure the people of Ontario—are wondering why this minister is ignoring the will of the House and his legal responsibility, and risking his own personal well-being in withholding these documents. There's no acceptable reason to withhold information any longer. It's time to table all the documents, complete without redactions and omissions. The people of this great province deserve no less.

On Monday, September 24, over 36,000 documents were delivered, with literally thousands of pages missing, redacted, whited out, reference attachments omitted or, worse, entire documents and chains of reference materials and correspondence simply not included as part of the package.

To put this into perspective, in spite of the volume of documents delivered, there was no correspondence or documents from the Premier or from the member from Scarborough Centre, who was the Minister of Energy when these decisions were made, or their staff. I know that it's hard to believe, but it's a fact; not an email, not a memo, not a letter.

There are only two conclusions that you can take from this: first, that the Premier or the minister or their staff were not involved in any of the decisions concerning the cancellations of these plants. But does it seem possible that there's so little oversight over this ministry? It's truly hard to believe, but when you consider the magnitude of the waste—over \$640 million—maybe that's the answer: no direction and no oversight from this government. But that would mean that the Ontario Power Authority made all the decisions without direction from the elected representatives of the people. The second possibility is that they are withholding documents and are not following the will of the House. Even in what was delivered, there are clearly missing documents and documents that were heavily whited out and missing information.

I believe that any reasonable person would conclude that this is clearly against parliamentary procedure and your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

On Tuesday, September 25, the member from Cambridge moved that this House direct the Ministry of the Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to table immediately with the Clerk of the House all remaining documents ordered by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16 and that the matter of the Speaker's finding of a *prima facie* case of privilege with respect to the production of the documents by the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to the Standing Committee on Estimates be referred to the Standing

Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which is hereby reconstituted as it was on September 9, 2012, and that the committee be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair and shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012.

Speaker, this is just another failure of this Liberal McGuinty government to act in the best interests of the public and not for selfish self-interest. I'm very specific when I say "the Liberal McGuinty government" because I don't want to paint past Liberal governments with the same brush, as I've never seen such a lack of regard for the people they serve, only trying to cling on to power at whatever cost.

If you are shocked and disgusted with the cost of \$640 million, one wonders what's in the documents they are so desperately trying to keep from the opposition and from the people of Ontario.

We see that it's not just the people of Ontario who are being thrown under the bus; it's now one of their own. The current Minister of Energy is being sacrificed to avoid further document releases. He's putting the McGuinty Liberal Party first, which may be commendable, but at what cost? The cost of his own career in politics, his professional career, but more importantly, at the cost of the people of Ontario, who are paying the bill: \$640 million and rising.

Let's just look at half of this seat-saving deal: the Oakville power plant cancellation. The House was told by the McGuinty Liberal government that the cancellation cost of the Oakville power plant was \$40 million. Then, with the heavily censored documents, with information clearly whited out, blank letters and documents with only a title on them, the cost is clearly over \$450 million—11 times more than was disclosed by this government.

Let's think what we could do with that huge amount of wasted dollars. How many new or expanded hospitals and long-term beds could we build? How many miles of public transit, highways and bridges could we construct, and the good-paying jobs that come along with these massive infrastructure projects? But no, this money was wasted, and now this government and this minister are not following the parliamentary procedure that requires them to release these documents. The longer they refuse to give these documents and table them, one has to wonder what the true cost is.

1320

I've heard from the members opposite who have said that they're not pleased to rise to discuss this issue, and probably they shouldn't be. They've been caught red-handed. But then, promptly, they take an easy tangent away from the real issue, that of the fundamental issue of accountability. They talk of self-serving excuses of why they should not have to disclose the documents, such as solicitor-client privilege, and the negative impacts of obtaining a deal to compensate for damages with the contractor, who was well on their way to completing their contract with this government. But parliamentary privilege and the subsequent ruling by you, Speaker, are very clear—crystal clear—that the rights of this House

supersede both of these issues. The minister and the McGuinty Liberal government are not above the law, and that is what this is all about.

We, on this side of the House, are carrying out our duty to our constituents: holding this government accountable for the unjustifiable waste of scarce taxpayers' dollars.

Speaker, it's bad enough that this government has wasted more than \$640 million and counting on these cancellations, but it is also becoming clear that the subsequent relocation makes no sense for technical as well as the obvious bad economic reasons. The power is not needed in the high-growth areas of the western GTA, not in Sarnia and Bath, hundreds of kilometres away.

As the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington pointed out, the existing Lennox plant is currently less than 1% utilized. Yes, that's less than 1%. So how could this be? With 2,100 megawatts of power sitting there unused, why would we be adding almost 1,000 more? It's simple physics. The power is not needed in eastern Ontario but in the GTA, hundreds of kilometres away. So adding 50% generating capacity to Lennox will do nothing but just leave more unused capacity—and when the generators cost more than \$1 billion, it's expensive unused capacity.

The answer is to build new transmission lines to the west end of the GTA, at a cost of \$210 million. Why wasn't that the decision that was made when the cost of \$1.2 billion was highlighted for the cost of new generators in Oakville? Does this make sense? Hardly. But how can we trust this government and their latest estimates?

In addition to the costs of the transmission lines, there need to be new power corridors negotiated all the way from eastern Ontario, through the city of Toronto, through First Nations territories. There are huge power losses that go along with this—with transporting power over those long distances. But obviously it must not have made sense or they would have done that in the first place. Getting another power corridor through those areas of Oshawa, Pickering and through Toronto is an enormous nightmare that likely can't be done when this power is needed.

Speaker, it's not just a matter of the money that needs to be scrutinized, but it's also the new locations and the need to stop these projects. If they are only a continuation of wasting more money, more of our taxpayers' dollars, it's just indeed another expensive mistake.

Over the past few days, I've heard members opposite give their reasons why they feel that they are above parliamentary rules that have endured centuries of scrutiny and have served not only our great province of Ontario well, but also our great country of Canada, as well as many other great democracies throughout the world.

I have heard how great a member this minister is and of the contributions he has made, and I don't dispute any of these claims. But amid all this admiration, I haven't yet heard a hint of remorse for the \$650 million in

taxpayers' money that has been wasted, or any unease by these Liberal members at letting their colleague the Minister of Energy take the fall for the actions of this McGuinty Liberal government, or that he may very well have not had anything to do with it.

I think most people here and in the province know exactly who was involved in these decisions: the very people that the Minister of Energy is protecting. But, Speaker, this is not the point here. He is refusing to release documents that he is legally required by parliamentary procedure to release. It is that simple; no more, no less. It's the law. Would you ever condone tampering with or withholding evidence by a public body? I don't think so. It's not the way our democracies function; it's not the way Ontario works.

Speaker, it's time for the Premier and the former Minister of Energy to appear before this House and explain why this current Minister of Energy is being made to lay his career and his reputation at their altar. It's time for the members opposite to stand up and tell their colleague to do the right thing and to produce all the required documents. If they are truly interested in transparency, as they tell you, the people of Ontario need to know. Stand up and be heard. Tell the Minister of Energy to put partisan policies aside. Turn these documents over and allow the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to review the file. Do the right thing.

I urge the Minister of Energy to weigh his options. His boss, Premier McGuinty, is on the way out. This government, exhausted, discredited and devoid of vision, is rolling to the end of the line. It isn't worth laying down his career and his reputation for. If there's a conflict between loyalties to this government and to the people of London West, the choice should be easy and obvious. His constituents will pay for the bill of the Mississauga and Oakville power plants as much as mine. Ontarians deserve to see the bill that they have no choice but to pay, whether their MPP is a cabinet minister or a backbencher.

These scandals drowning the McGuinty government force me to look back at some of my political role models. Politicians of the highest moral stature from our region, such as Senator Bob Runciman, John Cleary, Jim Brownell and Noble Villeneuve, come to mind almost immediately.

Politics and government call upon us to act responsibly and humbly in the interest of the long-term benefit of our great province, despite our disagreements. Where the current Liberal Party sees its own political expedience, I see the problems of debt and attitude to public money that need to be rectified if we are to prosper again.

My frustration with the present government stems from a deeply held belief that we in Ontario have been blessed with bountiful resources, enviable workforce skills and an entrepreneurial drive second to no other province or region.

McGuinty's current focus is to look good on the evening news. I say we need a government that unleashes Ontario's potential and gives Ontarians the honest, trustworthy and responsible government that they deserve.

Speaker, it's time for this government to live up to its requirements and live up to what the people of Ontario expect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I rise today, as many others have before me, to speak about the motion on the floor. A number of members have spoken before me on this motion, so, Speaker, at the risk of sounding a bit repetitive, I'll speak to the motion as well.

The motion on the floor, of course, refers to the production of documents as requested by the committee on estimates in their examination of the Ministry of Energy. I had the opportunity to sit in on a number of meetings of the standing committee when this discussion began.

Between May 9 and July 11, the Minister of Energy appeared before the standing committee for the purpose of answering questions regarding the 2012-13 estimates of the Ministry of Energy. While the minister answered questions relating to a number of issues, the committee members from the official opposition spent considerable time asking the minister questions relating to the two gas plants that were to have been built in Oakville and Mississauga.

1330

The first motion by the member from Cambridge came forward on May 16 of this year. The first motion was discussed at that time, and as we have heard, the Chair of the committee, the member for Beaches–East York, ruled, “They have the right to ask for the documentation. The minister has the right to decline either giving that documentation or giving voice to that documentation during his answering of the questions.”

He continued to say, “I think the minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and I would expect him to do so.”

On May 16, it was also brought forward that the issue of gas power plants in Oakville and Mississauga was before the public accounts—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Windsor West.

I'm hearing a lot of noise from one corner of the House, and I would ask them to come to order.

I return to the member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Where was I? The gas power plants were before the public accounts committee, and the suggestion was made that we didn't need two committees reviewing the same issue. That was not acceptable, and the initial motion went forward.

We've heard over the past number of days the chronology of events for both the Mississauga and Oakville plants, details of which were outlined in the minister's letter to the standing committee dated May 30, 2012. I will quote from the minister's letter wherein he refers to “the sensitivity of commercial interests that are at stake” and that “disclosing any more at this time would significantly prejudice the province's interests.”

The minister's May 30 response to the standing committee reflected the sensitive nature of the information. The letter was four pages and outlined the chronology of events with respect to both plants. He referred back to the chair's ruling of May 16 and stated that “these very commercially sensitive negotiations have been carried out on a without-prejudice basis. Thus both the government and the OPA have legal obligations to not disclose the content of those negotiations at this time.” This response was in keeping with the Chair's ruling.

The CEO of the OPA also responded to the request on May 30. Mr. Andersen, in his letter, refers to a response that he provided to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on the same issue dated May 16. His response to both requests was, “There is commercially sensitive information that has been provided to the OPA in without-prejudice negotiations and legally privileged information, the disclosure of which would significantly damage the position of the OPA.” In short, it would not be in the best interests of Ontarians to release sensitive information through the negotiation period.

On July 11, 2012, the committee passed a motion asking the Chair to write a letter to the Speaker and draw attention to a possible matter of contempt and a breach of the ancient parliamentary right. I should note that in the period between the original motion in May and this motion, attempts were made to modify the motion to respect the ongoing negotiations, none of which were acceptable to the opposition and third party members on the committee.

Speaker, what also happened on July 11 was that the minister provided the committee with a letter, also dated July 11, which stated that the OPA had reached an agreement to relocate the Mississauga gas plant, and as such he asked the ministry to file the requested correspondence with the committee. If the minister was trying to hide anything or if he was anything but transparent, would he have provided this update to the committee and asked the ministry and the OPA to start gathering documentation? At all times through the proceedings—and I was there—the minister was answering questions, some of which required balancing taxpayer interests and parliamentary requests.

I listened with interest when my colleague the member from Guelph outlined what occurred in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts—again, Speaker, there were two parallel processes on this issue, one in estimates and one at public accounts. Public accounts had the benefit of having the Auditor General present, and seemed to proceed in a civil and respectful manner. The members of the public accounts committee were asking essentially the same questions and referring the matter to the Auditor General. We have heard, Speaker, that the Auditor General voiced concerns about information that may be commercially sensitive or subject to client-solicitor privilege.

I wonder if the opposition members of the estimates committee were aware of the progress or discussions taking place at public accounts. I'm sure they were. I'm

sure the member from Cambridge didn't bring forward his motion and comments without discussion with his colleagues. Was he not advised at the time that public accounts—the Auditor General was reviewing this issue? Do they not trust the Auditor General, or was that process not public enough or fast enough to their liking?

Speaker, we know what has transpired since July 11. The motion from the Standing Committee on Estimates came forward for review. The member for Cambridge raised a point of privilege with respect to the tabling of documents. At that time, the negotiations regarding the Oakville plant were still ongoing, so those documents had not yet been produced. The Speaker, in his wisdom, ruled on September 13 that the three House leaders were to meet and try to come up with a solution to the request from the Standing Committee on Estimates. Unfortunately, the opposition and the third party were unwilling to consider the government's proposals or engage in any serious discussions to solve the impasse. Ultimately, on Monday, September 24, a large number of documents related to the Oakville and Mississauga power plants was released. There were also letters of transmittal from both the Minister of Energy and the OPA indicating that all documents related to the original May 16 request of the committee were released. Apparently, these letters of transmittal or attestations were not sufficient for the opposition.

Much has been said about our decision during the election to relocate these projects, Speaker, 11 days before the election. According to CBC News on September 26, 2011, "Hudak sharply criticized the ... Liberals' plan ... to halt construction of the ... power plant." The Leader of the Opposition also spoke of "the sanctity of the contract," but then, somehow, there was a bit of an about-face with the Progressive Conservatives during the election. Having been silent and disengaged on the issue for years, on October 5, the following headline was in the news: "Hudak Vows to Scrap Mississauga Power Plant." This was the day before the election. "Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak pledged to get rid of" the plant, saying "That's right. Done. Done, done, done." I wonder how that decision was made. Was it a last attempt to gain seats? The official opposition, the Progressive Conservatives, are also on record as saying during the election that they would cancel all contracts under the Green Energy Act, not just the Mississauga and Oakville plants. What would have been the cost of that? Where would those cuts have come from?

Last year, the PC Party was very clear on where they stood with a number of contracts and green energy. Quoted in an article in the Windsor Star—my hometown—on May 11, 2011, entitled "Ontario Pledge Threatens Local Green Jobs" the PC leader, Tim Hudak, in a speech to the Ontario Power Summit, indicated that "a Conservative government would end a \$7-billion 'sweetheart deal' with Korean renewable energy giant Samsung and kill the province's FIT—feed-in tariff—program." Let me be clear here. The deal was for Samsung to invest \$7 billion in Ontario. The Leader of the

Opposition repeated this through the election and was unapologetic about the loss of jobs that would be directly impacted by this view. This wasn't just about Samsung. This was about all the contracts and all the jobs created in the green energy industry, many in my riding of Windsor West. So much for the sanctity of contracts. When the Leader of the Opposition spoke to this motion, he stated "Taxpayers have been ripped off... It is going to cost jobs." What would have happened if he was on this side? What would have been the cost of all the contracts he was going to terminate and the jobs that were created?

Speaker, I always listen intently when I take my seat in this House, so I was here when a member of the opposition last week stated, "Congratulations for destroying our coal-based electricity-generating economy." Now we really know where the Conservatives stand. They would continue with coal burning and its impact on the health of our province. There have been many statements over the last few days about parliamentary procedures and history. Frankly, I won't take any lessons from the opposition on parliamentary protocol. The opposition members sit here and speak of the importance of parliamentary protocols and procedures when they repeatedly—not only in this debate—disrespect House members by questioning their integrity.

They ask for documents; they receive documents. Now they are questioning the integrity of the minister by questioning the attestations signed by the minister, a duly elected, respected MPP and minister of the crown.

1340

Speaker, just like at budget time when they decided they were going to oppose the budget without any attempt to work with us on the budget, they decided they were going to move this motion, even before the documents were provided before the Speaker's ruling. I was reading it on Twitter before we heard it in the House, before the ruling was made.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize again for interrupting. Now there's noise coming from another corner of the House. I would ask all members of the House to please come to order so as to allow me to hear the member for Windsor West.

I return to the member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you again, Speaker—again, the respect shown for their fellow members.

This is another attempt by the opposition to prevent the governing, to prevent the business of the Legislature, to prevent this minority government from working. They can go out there and say that nothing is being done, when the truth of the matter is, they are directly impeding good co-operative governance by ringing bells, stalling debate and essentially voiding our parliamentary system. I ask you, Speaker: Are these acts by the opposition in the best interests of Ontarians?

I will take no lessons, again, from the opposition on parliamentary decorum or procedure. I may not be a political science professor, as the member from Cambridge reminds us that he is, but I was a student of political

science, and I was taught that there stands a history of parliamentary respect, which is often not evident on the opposition side. How many times have they had to be reminded, when a government member is speaking, such as now, to be—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm afraid I'm going to have to once again ask the official opposition and the third party to come to order so as to allow me to hear the member for Windsor West.

The member for Windsor West.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you—when a government member is speaking, to be respectful, as we are towards them when they are speaking, at all times.

We know that the OPA made the original decision on where the plant would be located, Speaker. The opposition indicates the decision to relocate the plants was done outside the OPA. In a tweet, the member from Nipissing stated: "Liberal staff interfered with OPA—drove costs of cancelled power plants...." But they would have done the same. So which is it? Had we continued with construction, then we would have been hearing the opposition say we're not listening. In fact, right after the election, there were questions brought forward in the House to the minister about trucks still on the site and why construction hadn't stopped.

This is just one more matter about the opposition doing just that: opposing. Since they're not on this side, I guess they don't have to be accountable for their promises or statements.

I accept that we are government, so we had to make the decision. I also believe and agree that the public has the right to know, and the details are in the large number of documents that have been released.

I've heard comments about standing up for taxpayers. I ask the opposition: If you were government, how would you stand up for taxpayers? By cancelling contracts across the province? By eliminating full-day learning, firing teachers or privatizing health care? How would that be?

Even with all these delays and despite the rhetoric, Ontario remains one of the most competitive jurisdictions in the world, with a strong education system and a jurisdiction that has done better in the recovery from the recession than any other area. I know that the opposition would rather ignore what others are saying, but Ontario is strong, and Ontario is a leader.

I've heard many members from the opposition suggest that we are not taking this seriously, that we are trying to hide information. Speaker, we absolutely take this seriously. We also take our role to protect the province and protect our taxpayers through very sensitive commercial negotiations very seriously. The minister has been transparent and accountable in all his actions and statements throughout this. Yes, there were costs to relocating the plants. Those costs were unavoidable. Yes, they could have been used for other services—nobody is denying that. But ultimately the opposition has received documentation which outlines what the costs of the relocation

will be. I will say again: They asked for documentation; documentation was received.

I will repeat what many of my colleagues have stated: The Minister of Energy has done nothing wrong in his representation of the Mississauga and Oakville plants. I stand as a proud member of this government, with members who stand up for their constituents, a leader who supports his members and all Ontarians, and a Minister of Energy who is principled, transparent and accountable—a minister who we know served as Attorney General for four years, has been a member for nine, a member of the Ontario bar for over 25 years; a minister who always puts the public's interests first.

The opposition has said that this is not about the minister, yet the motion brought forward to the Speaker says that the minister has refused to comply with an order from the standing committee. I guess the opposition doesn't recognize that their actions and statements are very personal statements. I will repeat: The Minister of Energy has responded to questions, has provided the documentation and is principled, transparent and accountable.

I cannot support this motion as it is currently written. I cannot support a motion that attacks a member's personal integrity. The government has put forward an amendment that will focus the work of any review of this matter on the information and how it will be shared, and remove any personal or partisan commentary. I believe that more substantive changes would improve this motion and hopefully allow us to get on with the important business that the people of Ontario are counting on us to move forward with, and the reason that we are all here. Speaker, thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I rise today to speak to the amendment to the amendment to the motion put forward by my colleague from Cambridge.

The member from Cambridge is a thoughtful and intelligent individual. He has a Ph.D. in public policy and knows, from both an academic and practical point of view, of these ideals that are enshrined in this Legislature and the importance of upholding them. So I commend him because he has recognized the genuine threat that this whole obstructionist debacle poses to these ideals and has taken action that will reinforce our commitment and faith in this legislative body.

We are elected to represent the people of this province, and as the official opposition it is absolutely necessary for us to hold the government to account. To carry out our duties to the people of Ontario, we as MPPs are bestowed certain privileges. We have a system whereby these privileges are recognized as inherent and fundamental to the work we do as legislators.

In an ideal world, of course, it would be enough to simply create rules by which we're governed, post them, and hold everybody to the honour system. I do believe that every member of this Legislature, when elected, comes here with every intention of serving the people of Ontario with honour and with integrity. Invariably,

though, we will face instances where these rules are breached—instances where members will act in contradiction to the principles of this legislative body.

I will concede that the situations in which these breaches occur can be complicated. As members, we must contend with matters that require the balancing of multiple interests. However, we're always required to return to the principles of our Westminster parliamentary system as a means to guide us. These principles act as a check on our behaviour so that we remain committed to our ultimate goal, and that is to serve the people of Ontario.

As with any set of rules or guiding principles, we need to be able to punish transgressors by recognizing and punishing those who defy our legislative principles. We serve to not only elucidate these principles but deter others from making similar mistakes. After all, how many times have you heard of people being pulled over for speeding, their excuse being that they didn't know what the speed limit was? In almost all these cases, the police officer will simply say, "Now you know," and write your ticket.

This is why I feel that this motion of contempt is so important. We need to be able to not only hold the government as a whole accountable, but also those members who violate the rules that allow us to do our job in this House.

This also makes me resent suggestions made by certain members opposite that have served to try to mitigate the gravity of this situation. The Speaker of this House found there to be a *prima facie* breach of privilege. In other words, the Speaker has ruled that the members of this House have, in some form, been denied their inherent rights to conduct the business of this province. And given that the business of this province is to serve the people, our denial of these rights ultimately hurts the people of Ontario.

1350

It's bad enough that the whole gas plant fiasco from which this contempt motion ultimately stems will cost the people \$640 million, but the government has used every trick in the book to attempt to keep these costs under wraps. This is not a decision for the government to make, however. The estimates committee, when fulfilling their duties to the people, requested the documents that contained this information because they recognized that people should understand the magnitude of this government's decision. The people need to know that the cost of having a government say one thing and do another can be very high. The people need to know when their elected officials make bad decisions, because the people can then change and choose to elect someone else in the next election. This is how our system works, and any attempt to withhold or cover up, as the government has done, is an affront to our democracy.

If I may say something to those across the aisle, these are not personal attacks. For the last few days, members opposite have essentially read through the minister's resumé and told us—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We've got a long way to go before 6 o'clock. There is going to be order in this House this afternoon.

I return to the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker.

For the last few days, members opposite have essentially read through the minister's resumé and told us how much integrity he has. I'm not questioning whether the minister was a good lawyer when he practised, and I believe that most members hold integrity as one of their highest values. The question is whether or not the actions of the minister warrant a ruling of contempt. We already know there exists a *prima facie* point of privilege, and throughout the thousands of documents released in response there is strong evidence that we're still being denied the whole story.

Whether the minister provided sound legal advice in his past career as a lawyer is quite simply not relevant. What is relevant is, why did we receive numerous redacted documents? Why did it take so long to receive documents that outlined hundreds of millions of dollars of costs to the taxpayer for cancelling the power plants? Why does it seem that we conveniently don't have the direct emails from the former Minister of Energy and the Premier regarding the plant cancellations, even though most anecdotal evidence suggests that the plant cancellations were directed by the government?

These are the relevant questions. Understandably, they are questions the Liberal government is uncomfortable answering, but I hope the party opposite recognizes that the more they drag this out, the more they put up roadblocks to the truth, the deeper they dig themselves in this hole and the worse it's going to be.

To hide on the part of the Liberals has led down this path where it is now necessary for us to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Finance. It is necessary for us, as the representatives of this province, to get to the bottom of this. Holding committee hearings on this matter will allow us to ask the tough questions in an attempt to extract information that the party opposite might not like us to see. It also gives the province an opportunity to hear from the bureaucrats who are in the middle of this whole debacle. It is clear in reviewing the thousands of documents and emails that the employees of the OPA were completely caught off guard by the government's surprise decision to cancel the power plants. The government's decision on both occasions threw the OPA into turmoil, requiring them to reverse course on projects that were already well under way. This is possibly the worst and most inefficient way to make decisions in government.

From the beginning, the PC Party cautioned the government on building these power plants in such a densely populated area. We advised that perhaps the government could pursue other options to provide power to the southwest GTA. Of course, the government rebuffed our concerns and went ahead anyway. They worked with industry to find acceptable sites and then tendered the contracts. Once the contracts were awarded, the long,

costly process of filing for permits and obtaining approvals then began.

Throughout the process, the government did not second-guess their decision. They were committed to the two projects. But of course, as the 2011 election got closer, the pressure within the five ridings affected by the two plants began to grow. Despite the years of planning, the approvals, and the beginning of site preparation, the government suddenly reversed course on their commitment to the plant in Oakville.

When going through the documents, senior bureaucrats raised the obvious question among themselves, and that was, "What do we do about the contracts?" We need to understand that the OPA had signed a 20-year power purchase contract with TransCanada Energy for the Oakville power plant. An arbitrary decision to unilaterally cancel a contract is not without penalty. A major corporation does not invest all this money over a number of years into a future plant location and just walk away from it when the government decides it doesn't want to honour its contractual obligations. Clearly, the people of Ontario were going to be on the hook for the economic value of the contract despite the abandonment of the power plant's construction.

In fact, documents revealed that Susan Kennedy, director of the corporate-commercial law group at OPA, advised her colleagues in a briefing document of the following: "The OPA may terminate the contract only if there's a supplier event of default. TransCanada has not committed a supplier event of default. As such, there's no current basis on which to terminate the contract. Damages for a contractual termination by OPA," which would be a contractual breach, are estimated to be \$1.4 billion. That's \$1.4 billion; that was the possible cost of the cancellation being thrown around early in the proceedings. Despite the convenient lack of emails we received from the former minister, I do imagine he read that briefing.

In fact, documents from the Minister of Energy's legal department reveal the following: "My sense is that the minister's office is prepared to accept the procurement and transaction risks associated with a contemplated decision to terminate the Oakville contract." And he recognizes that there will be significant costs in doing so. This would seem to indicate that the former minister was prepared, at one point, to commit \$1.4 billion to his government's seat-saver program.

These are the kinds of things we endeavour to find out with this contempt motion. We need to have the ability to probe further into this mess because the people of Ontario deserve to know why their government was prepared to commit \$1.4 billion toward a decision that would achieve nothing of value for the province.

We do know, from the proceedings of the estimates committee earlier this spring, that the Mississauga power plant cancellation was directed by the Liberal campaign team, which in and of itself is a frightening proposition. We also know that the decision to cancel this plant cost the average ratepayer a 1.4% increase on their hydro bills this past year.

It's astounding to me to think that the Liberal campaign team could make such a decision that would affect the amount people pay on hydro bills. It really is a shame. At this point in time, we know that the taxpayer is on the hook for at least \$640 million between the two cancelled plants—\$640 million, and what do we have to show for it? I don't really know the answer to that question. It seems that we've gotten nothing for this money except a couple of Liberal seats in Mississauga and Oakville.

When such a horrendous misuse of taxpayers' funds occurs, it is necessary that we get the full story behind it. We need the taxpayers to know what motivated these decisions. We need them to know how it will affect their hydro and/or tax bills. This government owes the people of this province an explanation, but they've been incredibly reluctant in offering such an explanation. That is probably the most troubling aspect of all of this. How bad must the truth be that the government can't even fulfil their minimum commitment to be transparent to the people of Ontario?

That's why we've tabled this contempt motion. We, on this side of the House, remain committed to our duty to the taxpayer—even if the government side insists on putting their self-preservation ahead of transparency.

I do need to be careful, though. It would appear that not all members opposite share their government's position on this matter. A Toronto Star article last week quoted one of the senior Liberal cabinet ministers saying of the gas plant issue: "We've got to get out of this. This is embarrassing." The article also mentioned that some members were saying the whole debacle was a shame.

It would appear that there are members opposite who do want to do the right thing. There are some members who realize that withholding these documents violates parliamentary privilege. There are some members opposite who want the government to come clean and abandon its misguided efforts to cover up the key facts of this issue. It's nice to see that some members of this party opposite share a commitment to the truth and share a commitment to the people of Ontario. It's nice to see that some members of the party opposite are ashamed, as are we, that we had to pursue such drastic measures to try to get a straight answer on these costly power plants.

It is unfortunate that the leadership of the governing party does not share this view and are instead intent on silencing members who speak against the government's actions. This is another reason why our party's motion is so vital. Even certain members of Premier McGuinty's government would like to know the truth as well. Referring this matter to the Standing Committee on Finance is the best way in which we can get to the bottom of this matter.

At the end of the day, our commitment to the people of Ontario needs to be the sole guiding principle of our decisions.

1400

I think it is abhorrent that the Premier does not seem to take the gas plant boondoggle seriously. He tried to placate everyone last week by saying that of the 17 plants

the Liberal government has undertaken, they got two wrong—two wrong at a cost of \$640 million. I think most people who make a \$640-million mistake would show more contrition, especially given the fact that the \$640 million belongs to the people of Ontario. And I must say that \$640 million in wasted taxpayer money should never, in any sense, be equated to some measure of success, as Premier McGuinty seems to consider it. But, alas, the Premier continues to show how out of touch he is with average Ontarians.

We know that the OPA reached a memorandum of understanding with TransCanada that will allow the company to build a facility in Lennox, which is a couple of hundred kilometres from where the OPA originally determined there to be a need for energy. I understand that TransCanada had a legal contract with the OPA and that they expect consideration for the lost economic value of that contract, and while OPA is legally compelled to provide that consideration, I can't help but think of how procuring the Lennox plant in this manner will affect the bill for the taxpayer.

The area around Lennox was identified in the long-term energy plan as a location that would eventually need increased capacity. This was to occur much later, around 2018, I believe. The OPA therefore gave the Lennox contract to TransCanada as consideration for the lost economic value of the Oakville contract. The OPA's hands were no doubt tied, but awarding the Lennox contract in this way precludes a competitive procurement process. In essence, the Lennox plant has become a sole-sourced contract.

Further along those lines, you can bet that the highly paid corporate lawyers at TransCanada would not have advised their bosses to accept the OPA offer if they did not reasonably expect to recover substantially all of the lost economic value of the Oakville contract. Otherwise, they would have been well within their rights to take the case to court or arbitration.

What I'm getting to is that the government's decision to cancel legally binding contracts is having ripple effects, Mr. Speaker, ripple effects that will no doubt fall on the shoulders of the Ontario people. Had the long-term energy plan been followed and an RFP put out for the Lennox area a few years down the line, I would bet that the value of the contract would have cost the taxpayers less than what they'll have to pay now. Essentially, by cornering the OPA into making a deal with TransCanada after they cancelled the Oakville plant, the government will ensure that we end up paying more to construct the Lennox plant than we might have otherwise had to. These are the hidden costs that Premier McGuinty hopes nobody notices.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is no way to govern. This is no way to manage taxpayers' money. We have a duty to ensure that every dollar we spend gets the most for the taxpayer, because we understand that the people of Ontario work hard for their money. People don't mind paying a little bit of tax, provided they get something out of it. But let's review this government's \$640-million decision.

By ending two legally binding agreements, the government will waste \$640 million. The people of Mississauga will get a skeletal structure of the would-be power plant and maybe one day they'll dub it the "boondoggle statue." We get a plant built in Lennox for more money than we otherwise would have paid for it. And there's still no additional energy capacity in the southwest GTA.

In spite of all of this, the government continues to downplay the severity of their politically motivated decision. The Premier actually made comments implying that these contempt proceedings were fun for the PC Party. I can assure the Premier that this is not fun for anyone. It is not fun when a government makes a politically motivated decision that will cost the taxpayer hundreds of millions of dollars. It is not fun when, in the process of asking questions about these decisions, Premier McGuinty's government employs every obstructionist trick in the book. It is not fun when the Speaker finds there to be a breach of privilege. It is not fun that when a legitimate contempt motion is brought before the House, Premier McGuinty and his team continue to downplay its significance. For too long we've had a government that shows little respect for the people of Ontario.

We need to remember that a point of privilege was brought before the House of Commons in Ottawa over the Afghan detainees issue. Again, the government party cited solicitor-client privilege as justification for keeping certain documents from public view. However, the law clerk, Mr. Rob Walsh, had this to say: "Solicitor-client privilege, in my view, is an important privilege. It is one the committee obviously should respect but not necessarily be governed by. It is a principle that relates to the legal rights of people...."

"But that's in the context of legal rights, legal proceedings. There are no legal rights at issue here. These are not legal proceedings. These are parliamentary proceedings."

If everyone recalls, when Speaker Milliken ruled that there was a *prima facie* breach of privilege, the government immediately complied in turning over all related documents. They understood the gravity of the ruling, because they had an abiding respect for the principles of parliamentary procedure and what they represent. They understood that the very foundations of our democracy depend on these principles, and they did what they needed to do to uphold it.

It is a travesty to see Premier McGuinty make light of these proceedings, and it's a shame that over 2,000 of the documents provided to us were redacted. This motion is a matter of principle, Mr. Speaker, a way to show the people of Ontario that the government will be accountable even for its bad decisions.

The cynical way in which Premier McGuinty has handled this matter will serve no other purpose than to further disillusion people toward the honourable role that the public service plays in their lives. That is why I encourage everyone here to refer to their conscience. We need this matter to go to the Standing Committee on Finance so that we may finally get the answers we need

to adequately hold this government to account. This is an opportunity for all of us, and I hope that everyone here will make the right decision.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Michael Coteau: It's my pleasure to rise today to outline my opposition to the motion put forward by the member from Cambridge.

I don't support this motion, and before I outline my opposition to the motion, I'd like to take a few minutes to address why we are here today, why each of us—the MPPs, the political staff, the clerks, everyone who makes this Legislative Assembly work—shows up every day. We are here because we believe that our political system works, and we're here today because we believe in local democracy and that the functions within this House contribute to the betterment of the communities we represent.

This week will mark exactly one year ago that the people of Don Valley East entrusted me with the responsibility to serve as their member of provincial Parliament. I, along with other members of the House, knocked on doors, participated in debates—well, most of us participated in debates—and connected with voters to ask them for their support. I put my name forward and asked the residents of Don Valley East for their vote. I was successful, and I'm grateful for my community's support and their belief that I can represent their interests at Queen's Park.

I put my name forward as a Liberal, but more importantly, I put my name forward as a member of provincial Parliament, because I believe in the legislative tools that we have access to in this House and how those tools enable us to be the agents of change to help improve the lives of Ontarians. I put my name forward because I believe that what we do in this House is honourable, something that, to me, is among the most esteemed and privileged work anyone can do.

However, I'm quite saddened by what I see happening in this House over the last week. It has shaken my belief in the process. The tools found in this House are now being used in a disappointing way to compromise the rock-solid reputation of one of my colleagues, the honourable Minister of Energy, someone whose conduct, character and reputation I admire deeply.

I disagree with the official opposition's move to grind this Legislative Assembly to a halt, and I regret they have chosen this course. What we have seen in the past week is nothing more than an exercise in political gamesmanship, an exercise that, at its core, is simply a character attack on my honourable colleague the Minister of Energy, a man of unquestionable integrity, a man who holds the deepest desire to improve the lives of the people of Ontario.

Even worse, this exercise is keeping us from doing the work we need to do in this chamber for Ontario families, which is debating and passing the legislation they want to see moved along in Ontario.

The opposition spent all spring holding up the healthy homes renovation tax credit, a strong piece of the plat-

form that the Liberals were elected to bring forward in government, something that helps create jobs, helps our seniors stay at home and helps to grow our economy in Ontario. Last fall, the bill formed a significant part of our platform, and Ontarians sent us back here with a mandate to move forward and make sure it gets implemented. That is why I believe it's important that we get this bill passed, that we continue with the work we've been sent to do in this Legislature.

I cannot tell you how many people—I spoke about this a few months ago—in my riding of Don Valley East were supportive of this initiative. The healthy homes tax credit is part of our broader strategy to address senior issues. It's part of our strategic plan for seniors in this province.

What's quite attractive about the healthy homes tax credit is that it complements our addition of three million more personal support care hours each year. These are real benefits to Ontario seniors and I think we should be talking about this rather than changing the channel—what we're seeing the official opposition trying to do.

1410

I can tell you that when I'm out in my community talking to residents, they're quite disappointed with what the official opposition is doing and, in addition to that, the fact that the third party is sitting silent. The party who claims to be the defender of those who are taken advantage of is sitting silent and doing nothing to support the minister's reputation. Silence is loud.

I can tell you that when I'm out in the community, people are telling me this, Mr. Speaker. People in my riding, especially seniors, want their government to move on, to help ease the tax burden on health care costs and to give them a fair shake and to support this sector of our economy. In this context, I'm surprised that some members of the opposition are not supporting this bill, given how specifically designed it is to help seniors reduce costs to our health care system and to grow our economy. I can tell you, in my riding, that when I go to doors and community events and when I meet with residents, they're overwhelmingly supportive of this bill. The support I'm getting for this bill is probably due to the fact that, in Don Valley—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Don Valley East to confine his remarks to the subject that we're debating, the actual motion.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important for us to point out that we have business to do in this House, and by going down this path, what the opposition wants us to do is really not allowing this government to move forward, and I think the residents of Ontario overwhelmingly supported this government to move forward. But instead of doing the right thing, which is proceeding with the debate, we have to sit here all spring and listen to the bells being rung, which is really filibustering.

I sat in committee for months and I heard bells continue to happen, and it was an attempt by the opposition to slow things down. This is a continuation. We had a

slowdown in committee. We're having the House halt in order to stop progress in this province. It's shameful, and I expect that this is just a continuation to really undermine the progress of this great government and also to tarnish the reputation of the Minister of Energy.

I've done a bit of research, and this is the 15th time a motion like this has been brought to the House; and in the last 15 attempts, they've all failed. All of this is sensationalism. It's posturing, and it will amount to a political footnote. We have lost weeks of time to get things done for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we have complied with the Speaker's orders and we've handed over over 36,000 pages of documents to the party. My colleague the Minister of Energy has a distinguished record in this Legislature and in his community of London West, and it's a completely unnecessary process, to really smear his reputation.

The Minister of Energy's entire career is an example to all members of this House, including the opposition.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Don Valley East. I will ask the opposition members to please come to order and allow me to hear the member for Don Valley East. I have to be able to hear him.

The member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before entering politics, upon starting his legal career, the minister was a noted law professor and a successful attorney who helped start a community legal clinic in his own riding. This legal clinic was set up for some of the neediest people in our province. The legal clinic helped Ontarians get the legal help they needed in relation to the issues around social services, retirement income and tenants' rights. I'm thankful for a member like the Minister of Energy for doing the type of work he's done in his community.

Neighbourhood Legal Services in his riding of London and Middlesex are really a strong piece of the social fabric, and it's a living, breathing piece of my colleague's strong legacy as a real community builder.

The minister's social consciousness carried through the last election in this Legislature and through his role in different ministries. When the minister was in aboriginal affairs, my colleague fought for First Nations people, to strengthen their communities, especially up in the north. As Attorney General, my colleague tackled some of the most pressing issues of the day. He has quite a notable resumé, and I know that his efforts around the criminal justice system resulted in a reduction in the number of days and appearances to complete criminal court cases. As energy minister, he has shown the same resolved commitment by charting a smarter energy future for Ontario while improving our environment.

Throughout his career, he has shown a steadfast commitment to fighting for Ontario families and fighting for less fortunate people in our society. Through his leadership, he has made a remarkable impact by improving the lives of Ontarians. This is a minister who

has consistently achieved great results for the betterment of this great province.

Mr. Speaker, we want Ontarians to view politics as a positive exercise. Over the last seven weeks, we've seen what the opposition has done: They've created a myth that the Minister of Energy attempted to conceal or hide documents from the Legislature. This is simply not the case. We know that in May and in June, the minister went to the estimates committee and spent a considerable amount of time speaking to the members about the two gas plants. If anyone knows anything about negotiations or contracts, we know that the minister was placed in a very difficult situation. He was asked to answer questions regarding ongoing legal proceedings and confidential negotiations. It's difficult for a minister of the crown to answer questions while in this process because he or she has to protect the public interest. He, unlike other members sitting here today, has a very unique responsibility. This was captured well by the Chair of the committee, who stated, I believe the quote was, "The minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province."

The minister wrote the committee in late May and advised them that he would exercise his discretion because the documents were highly confidential and could place the province at a disadvantage. But the official opposition was not in the mood for an objective, balanced conversation. They were simply intending to undermine the minister.

On June 5, the member from Cambridge moved a motion, and this motion has brought us to where we are today. The official opposition and the third party have resorted to cheap political posturing by telling the public that the minister hid or concealed these records. This is simply not the case, Mr. Speaker. We want them to show interest in participating in the democratic process, and we want them to step up for their communities that they represent here at Queen's Park. Mean-spirited attacks on one's character like what we're seeing here today will reinforce people's negative views and reinforce those dominant stereotypes that exist concerning political parties, politicians and everyone included in this process. Mr. Speaker, the PC Party's attempt here to damage the reputation of the Minister of Energy is not surprising. We've seen this before, over the past eight years, and in particular especially in the last campaign in 2011.

The troubling fact is that the PC Party's playbook is starting to look like US-style Tea Party politics that we're seeing in the south. This playbook preaches the politics of divisiveness, the politics of division. It shouldn't have a place here in Ontario. This is the same party that pitted Ontarians against one another with the foreign workers—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the member for Thornhill to withdraw his unparliamentary remark, without reservation.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We didn't hear that.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I heard; I heard it.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, I did.

I return to the member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, being an immigrant and a visible minority myself in this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I point to standing order 13(b), that the decisions of the Speaker are not debatable or subject to appeal. The member from Don Valley East is doing just that.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, in the last election, when we heard from the PC Party about the foreign workers, I was disturbed. Coming from an immigrant family and being a visible minority myself, I was deeply offended by that. It's the same party that refused to distance itself from their campaign release of a disgraceful pamphlet which mainstream media outlets pointed to as borderline homophobia. They pushed out negative messages through various radio media, through leaflets. Mr. Speaker, when I first heard and saw some of these documents, I was ashamed—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to have to caution the member for Don Valley East. It's important that his language is temperate. So I would ask him to keep that in mind as he continues with his remarks.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I felt sad that we'd reached a point in Ontario's political discourse where this sort of thing could actually receive a stamp of approval from political parties—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The cover-up continues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex to withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'll withdraw the word "cover-up." Thank you, Speaker.

Interjections.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: You can't do that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The appropriate way is to say, "I withdraw."

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

I return to the member for Don Valley East, who has the floor.

Mr. Michael Coteau: We need to move together as a province, we need to move together as a Legislative Assembly, to stop this type of politics.

The fact is that these divisive tactics both failed very miserably. These petty gestures which attempted to shape public opinion to their mould had the reverse effect. It turned people off and succeeded in only lowering the discourse of politics in this province.

Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the lessons have not been learned on the side opposite. Recently, the PC Party continued with this pattern with the budget, when they voted against their own beliefs in committee for a perceived political gain. The party opposite is doing the same thing with this motion here today that we're debating. The political opportunism and divisiveness will not work in this province, and the longer it goes on, the more the likelihood increases that the public will catch on to the flawed nature of this pursuit.

The tactics that we're seeing being used today are not new. They have been used in many political forums in the past. And there are common traits that political parties who resort to this type of political manoeuvring have. It is clear that when you run out of ideas, when you're not effective as an opposition, when you continuously fail at the polls because your platform does not reflect or connect with the majority of Ontarians, you go to another tactic. It's clear—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: According to standing order 23(b), you have to stick to the subject when you're debating. This member is talking about platforms of other parties and whether or not we may or may not have said something in the past. This doesn't relate in any way to the motion under discussion.

Mr. Michael Prue: Point of privilege.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm advised that you have to give notice of a point of privilege before one can be considered.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you. I will get notice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Don Valley East must have his remarks be germane to the motion before the floor. I would ask him again to ensure that his remarks are indeed speaking to the motion.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I can go on and on, but I won't. I'll switch it up a bit and talk about what we need to do.

I think we're spending way too much time on this debate. I think that what it's doing in this House is stalling progress. I was sent by my riding to come in here and to be an agent of change and to join many people in this House who want to represent their community well to ensure that we keep continuing to move forward. We have an economy to continue working on. We have a green energy plan that we need to continue to work on. We have so many different initiatives that we want to continue to add to. The party opposite is using many tactics to stall this progress.

Just to wrap up, Mr. Speaker, over the last year, as a new member of provincial Parliament, I heard bells for months. Many hours were lost in this House, and the filibustering continued. Today we continue to see it happen with this motion. It's a waste of taxpayers' dollars; it's a waste of our time as legislators. But mainly it stops progress. There are so many things we can be

doing out there in the community and in this House to move Ontario forward.

I oppose this motion, and I support the Minister of Energy and his work. I believe that the work he has done in the past and the work he will do in the future will continue to contribute to this great province and move us along.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to get back to talking about why we are here and why we've gobbled up four days of legislative time. It has nothing to do with election platforms from over a year ago. It has more to do with the behaviour of this government since the last election, the lack of action by this government and the secrecy that has occurred on some very, very important issues.

This is about the accountability of this government. This about the defiance of that government in ignoring a Speaker's ruling. This is about the contempt shown by this government for both this House and the taxpayers of this province when it comes to two cancelled gas plants for political gain. It has nothing to do with election platforms from more than a year ago.

I'm not even sure if the member opposite even spoke about why we're here. It has everything to do with \$650 million of taxpayers' money that's been piddled away to keep five or six Liberal seats. That's what this is about. It's all about politics; it's not about good government policy.

The Speaker ruled back in May that our member from Cambridge had his privileges breached because the government didn't turn over documents that were required so the official opposition could do their job. That's what this is all about.

I know the Premier hasn't taken part in any of the deliberation on the motion by Mr. Leone, but I do know that the Premier is a fan of Shakespeare—that has come to my attention—and I hope my colleagues will forgive me a bit for paraphrasing. I know the member who just spoke was paying tribute to the minister and what a great career the Minister of Energy has had when it comes to law. It almost seems like we were attending the funeral of the minister. It was almost as if it was some kind of speech on the life of the energy minister.

This is the Shakespeare quote I would like to share, and I hope it makes it back to the Premier as well: The minister is an honourable man; so are they all honourable men. Come I to speak the truth's funeral today. That's Shakespeare.

I've sat here for the last four days of deliberations, and I can't help but think of that speech from Julius Caesar every time a government member gets up and raises the minister's honour in the House. Very few members on this side have actually brought up the minister when it comes to this. It's about the accountability of that government, and that's why we're here today. The minister's honour is not at question. I don't need to be reminded of the man's resumé every time a member from the gov-

ernment gets to their feet and parrots the same talking points, as we heard a few minutes ago, delivered to them by the Premier's staff.

It was interesting that when the Speaker asked the member to get back on point, it took a long time to try to find what that point was and remember where we were. They'll do anything they possibly can not to talk about the issue at hand here, because what has happened with the government has been indefensible. They have no defence for withholding the documents from the official opposition. It was quite evident in the ruling that came from the Speaker that they were withholding the documents. The documents were finally turned over, but the documents were tampered with. They were redacted. They were whited out. We didn't get the documents we required to do our job on this side, and that's why this motion is continuing.

I'm not sure if the members from the government side missed out the day the energy critic, Vic Fedeli, our member from Nipissing, stood up in the House and read a couple of dozen or so of pages that were sent over the previous night. As he read the items, "Oh my goodness, there's nothing on that page. Oh, there's nothing here; it's been whited out. Oh, it's been redacted." It's quite clear to the members on the government side, if they were paying attention and had come out of their hypnosis, that the pages were not turned over as the House leader and the Minister of Energy said they were.

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It would be more appropriate to direct my criticism not at the Minister of Energy, but at the former Minister of Energy, who is actually the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation now, and his total incompetency, if he actually even was given the opportunity to work on the energy file—I mean, that has come to light now. Who was really running the show over there? Was it the minister who actually was making decisions, or was it the Liberal campaign team, or was it the Premier's office? We're not exactly sure. I almost feel a bit sorry for the Minister of Energy and the former Minister of Energy, now the Minister of Economic Development, because maybe they're getting dragged through the mud here for decisions that they were never entrusted to make because the Liberal campaign team or the Premier's office are calling the shots. It's quite a scary thing for the people of Ontario when you consider that fact.

The ministers over there are entrusted with making decisions that will affect the day-to-day workings of our province, but are they really doing that? Who's actually making the decisions over there? It's been quite clear, from testimony at the estimates committee from the Minister of Finance, that the decision was a political decision. It wasn't made for good energy policy; it was made to save those Liberal seats in Mississauga and Etobicoke and Oakville. Anyway, I think the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation probably deserves to be on the same roasting spit as the Minister of Energy currently is.

As much as the government may wish to deny its existence, Mr. Speaker, we do have this thing called min-

isterial responsibility, and the minister holds the file. It was his responsibility to hand over all those documents, and even though the delivery was made, there were all the redactions and missing documents in those files that should still be turned over. The fault for that action lies specifically with the Minister of Energy, and that's why we're debating this motion here today.

It should not have come to this, Mr. Speaker. The government could have avoided this at many turns throughout the process. The government chose not to, and that's why we're here.

Over the last four days that the House has been sitting, the members on the government side have raised the minister's history as a lawyer. They brought up everything in his resumé except for his LSAT score. But really, it's not about his resumé; it's about the fact that he did not do what was required of him: turn over those documents. No one here is contesting the fact that the minister is a good lawyer. No one here is contesting that the minister has a good personality. I've met him on several occasions, and he is a nice gentleman. But the fact is that somebody has encouraged him or has given him his marching orders not to do what was required by the Speaker of this House, and now he's paying the price for it in the court of public opinion, as is the government, and the taxpayers of Ontario are being stuck with a \$650-million bill to save those six Liberal seats.

The fact is that the people of Ontario could have used a good lawyer a long time ago. The people of Ontario could have used an advocate willing to stand up after eHealth to cross-examine this government on how so much money could have been wasted for so little return. The patients at Ornge could have used a good lawyer or an advocate willing to stand up and ask how so much money could have been wasted and so little pain spared. I know on the Ornge matter that the members of the government side like to refer to our member from Newmarket—Aurora as Atticus Finch every time he stands up. He's been a strong advocate for the people who have been wronged by the Ornge fiasco, and he's trying to get answers on that file. Unfortunately, the government doesn't have the committees sitting in this House so that we can continue to get the testimony at the Ornge hearing at public accounts that the people of Ontario so rightly deserve. Unfortunately, we can't get the government to decide to reinstate the committee on finance so that we can look to find out if the government and the minister are in contempt on this file.

We deserve better than to have the truth hidden behind a redaction. This government does not get to tell the House what is relevant to the scope of inquiry. No member should ever again read a page that says "63 pages redacted; not relevant," as we did this week. We are the people's representatives here in the official opposition. We will decide what's relevant.

The government has two options at that point: It can produce the documents, or it can face the contempt charge in this House, and that's what the government has chosen. The government has chosen contempt. I say to

the government members that choosing contempt will not save you from the truth on this issue. It will come out at committee, and you'll continue to live through this until we get it to committee and through that procedure as well.

The greatest risk to the reputation and to the honour of the member from London West doesn't come from the official opposition, and it doesn't come from the third party either. The greatest risk to the reputation and the honour of the member from London West comes from the occupant of the Premier's chair. It's the Premier who has chosen to make the energy minister wear this, for some reason. It's the Premier, whose House leader tried to delay the discovery of the true cost of these failed power projects by trying to delay the release of the documents since May. It's the Premier and his campaign team, whose callous disregard for the public trust in Oakville and Mississauga has brought us to this point.

It's the responsibility of Her Majesty's loyal opposition—and I feel I should stress "loyal opposition"—to hold the ministers of the crown to account, and that's what we're trying to do by bringing in this motion today. It has nothing to do with divisive politics; it has everything to do with standing up for the taxpayers of Ontario, who have lost \$650 million, and who knows how much more, by the cancellation of these two projects.

Over the last few days, the members of the government have questioned both our right to oppose and our loyalty to this province. I'd remind them, especially the member from Don Valley East, who spoke moments ago, that it's my job and it's our job to stand up in this place when the government spends \$650 million on a hole in the ground in Mississauga and another one in the ground in Oakville. It just doesn't make sense for us not to stand up and question the government when something like that happens. I think the people at home—they're watching right now and they're saying, "Absolutely."

A Liberal campaign team should not be the ones making decisions that affect how much old Mrs. Smith up in North Hastings is paying for her electricity bill. You know who's going to pay for that \$650-million boondoggle of cancelled gas plants: It's going to be our seniors, who can least afford it, and our most vulnerable citizens.

We deserve transparency in government, and we have not received it from this government. We deserve full disclosure from this government, and we haven't received that either. When the government acts in defiance of the House and of a Speaker's ruling, it's our job to hold them to account.

I'm forced to ask if the members of the government side are simply so used to their government wasting taxpayers' money that \$650 million fails to unnerv them when it's put next to the \$2 billion that they wasted at eHealth and the \$1 billion that has been wasted at Ornge. Maybe \$650 million is just a drop in the bucket there. Let's not forget the over \$4 billion annually on the feed-in tariff program that's being wasted by this government.

The Speaker has given a ruling that the minister hand over all the documents, and the minister has failed to

comply, and that's why we're here today. The people of Ontario deserve to have the minister be held to account when information is withheld from their elected representatives. In this case, information has been withheld. That's been quite clear, if you've been paying attention for the last week or so. The people of Ontario deserve to have the minister held to account when the government wastes \$650 million.

We can argue that the member from Scarborough Centre should be the minister held to account in this case. That's the current Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, as I mentioned earlier. I don't find it shocking, by the way, that the member from Scarborough Centre has yet to be heard from on this as well, and I would look forward to hearing from the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, the Minister of Energy and the Premier, all of whom have been absent without speaking on this matter. I'm sure that the member from Scarborough Centre will have ample chance to face the music when he's brought before committee on this issue, should we get there.

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The Premier, too, shouldn't be above scrutiny on this matter. He has repeatedly tried to hold himself out as above accountability to the taxpayer. We've seen it on Ornge. The Premier should be compelled to appear before the committee on this issue as well, as it has quite clearly been a decision that was made by the campaign team and the Premier's office and not necessarily the cabinet. The Premier should be forced to answer questions about when the decision to cancel Mississauga was made, who was consulted about the decision, what campaign operatives made the political calculation, and why the current Minister of Energy admitted to the estimates committee that he found out about the decision through the media, instead of with other elected officials around a cabinet table. It's disgusting to know that the current Minister of Energy found out that the plants were being cancelled through the media and not by sitting around the cabinet table where these decisions are supposed to be made. That's where Ontarians have entrusted that these decisions should be made, around the cabinet table. We've seen this occur many times, where the ministers and the cabinet ministers are not making the decisions. All you have to do is look back at the G20 as well. Many of the cabinet and many of the caucus had no idea that that decision had been made.

Most of all, and perhaps this will be of interest to the government members of the committee, the Premier should be forced to answer why he sacrificed the honour of the member from London West over this issue. Government members have stood in this House for the last four days that the Legislature has been sitting and extolled the virtues of that member, and I'm sure they'd like to know the Premier's motivation for throwing him under the bus on this issue.

Again, the cost of this scandal: \$650 million—\$650 million—\$650 million.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's more.

Mr. Todd Smith: And it's going to be more than that. This is a lot of money.

TransCanada actually turned down a settlement for \$721 million. They turned that down, yet the Minister of Energy stood here a week ago today and said that this was only going to cost taxpayers \$40 million. He stood here and said that this is only going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario \$40 million, yet, as we found out from the documents that we got, TCE turned down a settlement for \$721 million in this case. And we're supposed to believe that it's only going to cost \$40 million? Give me a break. I was born at night, but it wasn't last night. I know the people of Ontario are far more in tune than to believe that it's only going to cost \$40 million when TransCanada has said they turned down \$721 million—completely out to lunch.

Six hundred and fifty million dollars is what we have found out so far that it's going to cost to cancel the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga. That's what we've uncovered. That's roughly \$130 million per Liberal seat saved; \$130 million to save those Liberal seats. Now that's a waste of taxpayer money, if I've ever heard it. With that much being wasted, surely somebody has to be held accountable for that.

The Speaker has ruled that all documents be turned over in this matter, and they obviously haven't been. Someone has to be held accountable for that, too. The government must be held to account, because every government member who stands up and defends this decision is as complicit as those who made the decision. I'm guessing that, of the 53 or so who are over there, there might have been 50 who were actually aware that this gas plant was being cancelled. Do you think I'm high or low on that? Probably 50 had no idea that that gas plant was being cancelled during the election campaign last year.

The minister has to be held accountable because ministerial responsibility is the best tradition of our democracy. The Premier has to be held accountable because, ultimately, he has brought this on this government. When I first got here, the Minister of Energy was one of the first ministers I met on a walk home one night. I don't need to be told about the minister's honour. I've talked to the minister several times first-hand. But he has to be held responsible for not doing what the Speaker said he had to do, which was to turn those documents over—and I don't blame the minister for that. The minister was taking his marching orders from the Premier's office. That's where this comes from. It comes from the Premier's office. If anybody should be held in contempt, it should be the Premier, who's not here, and unfortunately, he's thrown his minister under the bus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member knows full well that we're not to make reference to the absence of any member of the House.

I return to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to remind those on the government side and everyone here in the House and anybody who

might be tuning in to watch this debate this afternoon that this isn't about the Minister of Energy. This is about the accountability of that government. This is about the defiance of that government in ignoring a Speaker's ruling. This is about the contempt shown by this government for both this House and the taxpayers of Ontario. It's a damn shame. It's a damn shame.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise today to speak to a very serious motion that has been brought forward by the Progressive Conservative Party, a motion that has brought the work of this Legislature to a grinding halt.

I have listened closely to the debates on both sides of this House, and I am taken aback by the language that is used to characterize my friend and my colleague. I am enormously disappointed. I am sickened. I am outraged by the attempt at character assassination from the members opposite, members particularly of the PC caucus.

There is a long-standing tradition in this Legislature, in other Parliaments internationally, that we are given the distinction of being called "honourable members." That represents that despite our political differences, we respect one another as individuals. We respect the voters who sent us to this place. I can tell you that the attempts by the opposition to discredit an extraordinarily honourable person are a low point in my nine years in this Legislature. I think we could look back in history here and we would understand that this is a low point for far longer than just the nine years that I have been here.

I have an advantage because I have known Chris Bentley for many, many years. He represents the riding next door to mine. I know how much he is respected—indeed, admired—by the people of London. He does not deserve to be treated this way. I am very pleased to be able to stand up and talk about the Chris Bentley I know as a man of integrity, a man of honour, a man of purpose. He is someone who is always putting the interests of Ontarians first. There are many examples that I can use about his experience, before he was elected, that demonstrate to me the quality, the calibre of this human being.

He was the founder of something called Neighbourhood Legal Services. It's a legal clinic that provides support to clients of very modest means. He has been a champion for women and children who are dealing with issues of domestic violence and abuse. He has practised law; he has an impeccable reputation. He is exactly the kind of person that we should celebrate, not disparage as is being done by the people across this aisle.

Since he's been elected, he's done some very, very good things. I'm thinking about the family medical leave provisions, the amendments to the Employment Standards Act that pave a way for those of us who need to take time off work to care for a loved one, to have that ability and be able to care for the people that we love. Our jobs are protected. He's done exceptional work, as I say, here and before he came here, to support the safety of women and children who are victims of violence.

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Now, I know that this issue before us is a question of whether or not documents have been tabled. Well, I know the request was made, Speaker. I also know that that request has been complied with: 36,000 pages of documents have been delivered and have been made available. Speaker, this is purely political gamesmanship. Any reasonable person would understand that a government has to do its due diligence to ensure that documents that have been requested do go through a proper check to ensure that taxpayers' interests are protected. After all—

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Speaker, I've sat here for days and listened to this diversion about a personal attack on Mr. Bentley. This is not about that. She's going through all the things—a litany of things he's done has nothing to do with what we're dealing with. It's about the ruling on not disclosing the papers—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. I return to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If the member opposite had been listening to what I was saying instead of just running off the way he is prone to do, he would know that I am talking about exact—the 36,000 pages of documents that have been delivered. Speaker, this issue is about pure political gamesmanship. I think it is outrageous and does us all a discredit.

As I was saying, it is important that taxpayer interests were protected. There were very sensitive negotiations under way. The Auditor General acknowledged that. The Speaker acknowledged that. It would have been entirely irresponsible to release documents prematurely.

I can tell you that our government is fully committed to complying with substantial requests made by committees. We firmly believe in transparency and accountability. We have acted on that. In fact, we have done more than any party in this Legislature when it comes to making government more transparent and accountable. Let's think back to 2003, Speaker, when we came to government. Leading up to that election, you might remember that the PC Party failed miserably in the transparency test when it came to revealing details of the fiscal situation of this province. They characterized it as though "The books are balanced. We're in good shape financially." When we took office, we actually discovered a hidden deficit—a secret deficit of \$5.6 billion. The headline in the Toronto Star—I'm going to quote, Speaker. In October 2003, the headline in the Toronto Star said, "Outgoing Tories Outright Lied." That's a quote, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to take some care to ensure that her remarks are temperate and not inflammatory.

When I'm standing, you have to sit down, I have to add. At the same time, I think I have to remind the mem-

ber that it's important that the content of her remarks relate back to the motion that's being debated this afternoon.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, upon discovering this hidden deficit, we rolled up our sleeves. We got to work. We got the books back to balance. We ran surpluses for three budgets in a row and, more importantly, we changed the way pre-election finances are reported, so that never again will a political party in power be able to hide the fiscal situation of this province for its own political advantage.

So today, Speaker, the auditor signs off on the legitimacy of pre-election finances so that the people of this province will never be fooled again the way the PCs did back in 2003—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize for interrupting, but I also have to ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to withdraw her unparliamentary remark of a few seconds ago.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I withdraw.

Speaker, let's look at FOI compliance rates. Look at the Ministry of Energy FOI compliance rates: The compliance rate for the Ministry of Energy was 95.8%. That's not perfect, but it's pretty darn good when you compare it to what the compliance rate was back in 2003 when the PCs were in office: the number was 28%. A 28% compliance rate when they were in charge; 95.8% when we are in charge. I will take no lessons from the opposition regarding our commitment to transparency.

I think we should consider the record of the sponsor of the current motion, the member from Cambridge. He speaks of having an interest in private sector job creation. Yet when he had the opportunity to vote for the south-west economic development fund, he voted against it. The work of this—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Again to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: I have to again remind her that her comments need to have some reference at least to the debate that we're engaged in on the motion. She's bringing in a lot of additional information and not really tying it back, I have to say, to the motion. I'll ask her to do it again.

I return to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to speak to the motion, Speaker, and I have done that. I have said that the request has been complied with. I don't know that there's a lot more to say about that.

But what I would like to talk about is all of the work that is being held up by this purely political gamesmanship. Let's just have a look at what we would like to be working on—what we are not working on because of this ridiculous activity of the members opposite. These are the bills we would like to be discussing; instead, we are discussing this motion: Bill 30, the family caregiver leave; Bill 2, the healthy homes renovation tax credit; Bill 36, Security for Courts, Electricity Generating

Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act—we think that we should be talking about that.

We should be talking about the Education Amendment Act, dealing with concussions. We should be talking about the Ambulance Amendment Act, Bill 50, that deals with issues related to Ornge. I know members of the opposition would like us to continue to get Ornge back on track, but they're not letting us do that. They're blocking our—

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, the minister keeps talking about being held up. This whole place is being held up because they won't strike committees. I don't know why she's making statements like that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's not a point of order, and the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek knows that full well.

I return to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act: We'd like to be talking about that. We'd like to be talking about the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, Bill 75. We'd like to be talking about Bill 82, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, and we would very much like to be talking about Bill 100, the Great Lakes Protection Act. All of this work has come to a grinding halt because of the purely political gamesmanship of the party opposite.

The people of London North Centre sent me here because they wanted me to do a job: to represent their concerns, to make changes to make their lives a little bit better. We are doing that work, but I do believe that some of that work has to happen in this House. We are being prevented from doing that work, just like we were being prevented from doing that work when the bells were ringing time and time and time again.

Speaker, there's an issue in Cambridge that I know is of importance to the people of Cambridge, yet the member from Cambridge is not focused on that issue. I can tell you that Kathryn McGarry is talking about this issue; I can tell you that citizens of Cambridge are talking about this issue—and that, of course, is the issue of the Cambridge hospital. He actually voted against the budget that moves that project forward. People of this—

Mr. Rod Jackson: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order: The member for Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Given all this talk about documents, I'd like to know if the minister will table the documents she's withholding from the estimates committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's not a point of order; it was a point of interruption.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I will ask the House to come to order, first of all. Second, I will ask the Minister of Health again to resume, but I remind her of

the need to bring her remarks back to the subject at hand, which is the motion before the House.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the motion before the House is a bit of a phantom motion, because the Minister of Energy has complied with the request to release the documents; 36,000 pages of documents have been tabled. That work is done; there's a lot more work to do.

1500

This House, this Legislature, is not just a place where we pass laws. It is also a place where members of the community can come and have their voice heard and be acknowledged. Today should have been the day when we were talking about community health centres, because we're kicking off Community Health Centre Week. Members of the AOHCC, the Association of Ontario Health Centres, were here today. It was an opportunity to celebrate the work they do, caring for people who often have challenges accessing other parts of our health care system. They represent more than 100 primary health care organizations, 73 community health centres, aboriginal health access centres, community family health teams, nurse practitioner-led clinics—people delivering care to the people of Ontario.

I would have liked for them to be able to come to the House today and hear us talk about the work they're doing, celebrate the work they're doing. But, no, we can't do that today, because the opposition thinks it's more important that we discuss this bogus motion. I think they're not just doing the members of this Legislature a disservice; they're doing the people of this whole province a disservice.

There are many issues, as I said, bills that are before this House that I think we should be debating and that I think we should be passing, but we're being prevented from doing that. Of course, Bill 50 is a very high priority for me. This trenches greater oversight of our air ambulance system. It will allow us to ensure that taxpayers get the very best value for their money. The opposition is blocking that progress.

I know that the healthy home renovation tax credit will make a difference for seniors who need to put in a wheelchair ramp or renovate their bathroom or make their hallways a little bit wider or the door frames a little bit wider so they can stay home as long as possible. But members of the opposition are making seniors wait for this. I think that is just wrong. We want to move forward with the healthy home renovation tax credit.

You know, Speaker, it has been nearly one year since Ontarians went to the polls. They—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Chatham—Kent—Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Speaker. With all due respect to the member, I don't believe she's actually speaking to the amendment to the motion, and if she wants to go on and on and attack us with regard to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I understand your concern, but I would return to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and again ask her to relate her remarks to the motion.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, back to the motion: As I've said, the documents have been tabled. That work has been done.

The members opposite are preventing us from moving forward on other priorities, priorities that they pretend are important to them. When they have a choice—do they want to play political games or do they want to move forward on important items that improve quality of life?—they are choosing political gamesmanship over service to their communities.

I think it's wrong. I think it's very unfortunate. It is not in the tradition of the Progressive Conservative Party of John Robarts or Bill Davis, where honourable members were treated with respect. There would not have been an occasion in those days when there would be a contempt motion that suggested that a member of this House was not telling the truth.

Speaker, the people of this great province sent a minority government to this Legislature. I think the people want that minority government to work. They do not want to see this kind of game being played when other priorities—urgent priorities—cannot be moved forward because you are running out the clock.

I think it is a very sad day in this province when the good old Progressive Conservative Party—a party I actually was a member of for a few short years in my life, before I got wiser. I was a member of the Progressive Conservative Party in my foolish youth. That party, that old Progressive Conservative Party, would not have tolerated this kind of activity.

You know, we've got big challenges. We're coming out of a global recession that is really putting our families and our government under some pressure. We've got a plan to get back to balance, to protect the gains we've made, to make sure that our kids get the best possible education, that our seniors get the possible health care, that we keep our wait times down low, that we increase and improve access to primary care. There's a lot of work under way. I don't think we can afford this ridiculous waste of time. I want to see us move forward.

The people who sent me here sent me with very clear instructions: "Focus on jobs. Focus on the economy. Make sure health care is there when the people I love need it. Make sure my kids get the education so they can be the very best they can be." I think the members opposite were sent with the same marching orders, but they are ignoring the wishes of their constituents by grinding this wonderful place to a halt.

Speaker, I am honoured to be a member of this Legislature, but I have to say, I have been tested in recent days when I look and see what the members opposite are doing to this place. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Timmins—James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, the standing order says that a member can't impugn motives on to another. We have not been debating this motion for the last four days. We want to get to the vote. If anybody is filibustering, it's the government, at this point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That was not a point of order.

I now return to debate. I recognize the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. Similar to most of my colleagues who have risen in this House to speak to this matter, I am saddened and, in fact, I'm embarrassed that members opposite have been led down the garden path and in fact have to defend a matter when the decision was made by a campaign team. It wasn't even made by them, duly elected members, and now they have to defend it.

I am proud, however, to stand up for democracy, to stand up for the taxpayers of Ontario, to hold a government that has lost its way and takes it role for granted to account. That is my job and that's the job of everybody in opposition in this House. I stand proudly with my PC colleagues in seeking the truth on behalf of those we answer to, the taxpayers.

I'm troubled. I'm disappointed—the flagrant disrespect for the people for selfish, seat-saver, political gain reasons—that this decision was made. I'm disappointed that there has been no remorse for wasting \$650 million—and that's a minimum number; it's probably going to go over the billion—and depriving Ontarians of health care and education. We hear it all the time on the opposite side, that it's their priority. Just think of the services that are not going to be provided because of yet another waste.

I'm troubled by the cavalier attitude. There has been no sincere apology from one member when they've stepped up to speak, no action to make amends other than the shallow, "We should have done better." After nine years, that's getting a little—in fact, that's getting a lot tiring.

There's a culture of secrecy. Deals are signed with no accountability. Think Ornge. Think Samsung. And now we, you and I, the taxpayers—eHealth—are paying for that and will continue to pay. There's a blatant disregard for the integrity of this House, trying to spin rather than accepting accountability and responsibility.

The Minister of Health just said this is a bogus motion. Speaker, I go back and reflect on your words. This issue before us is a very serious matter, and you ruled, in your ruling on the point of privilege that was put forward by my colleague Mr. Leone from Cambridge, that there is in fact a *prima facie* case of privilege.

I want to also quote from your conclusion:

"The Standing Committee on Estimates was unquestionably entitled to request the documents sought from the Minister of Energy, and in the end the minister had an obligation to comply with the committee's call for those documents. The committee did not accept the minister's reasons for withholding the documents and persisted in its demand during an extended period of time.

"I am therefore satisfied that a *prima facie* case of privilege has been established."

It seems your colleagues on the Liberal bench are actually challenging your wisdom, Speaker, and your ruling. On behalf of my colleagues, Speaker, I want to thank you for that ruling, because at the heart is the ability of this chamber, the members of this Legislature, to do their job.

1510

The reason we're debating today is not because of any individual's character or reputation. It is specifically because a committee of this Legislature attempted for months to get important documents that it felt were important to do its work and the Minister of Energy repeatedly refused to produce those documents. The committee relied on this House and the rules of procedure to have access to that, and unfortunately, that's what it took. We would not be here today if the Minister of Energy had simply complied with the request of that committee months ago and provided the documentation that involved a multi-billion-dollar transaction in this province. Multi-billions of dollars are at risk in the green energy policy of this government.

Speaker, it's shameful: Blame the opposition and try to spin your way out of this rather than do the honourable thing and accept the consequences. You made the decision. Now accept the consequences. This is about open transparency and accountability, fundamental tenets of our society and this sacred House.

Speaker, my sons, Zach and Ben—Zach is 18 and Ben is 15. Every day—well, not every day; they're not really that bad kids—but often we have chats about what they need to do and to make decisions.

Mr. Todd Smith: Chip off the old block.

Mr. Bill Walker: Correct.

Everyone has the right and privilege, because of those who went before us, to live in this great province and this great country and make our own decisions and not be told what to do. But every decision has its consequence.

What type of model are we showing here when the members opposite continue to make decisions and won't step up? As my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex says, when you mess up, fess up. Just stand up, be honest to the Ontario taxpayer and say, "Look, we terribly messed this up. It's going to cost you \$1 billion, and we're sorry." It's not going to absolve them, but it certainly would go a long way in showing leadership. That's something that's sorely lacking on the other side.

Make amends. What are you going to do to fix it, rather than blaming Conservatives as far back as Confederation for all the ills of today? Just step up and be sincere. Tell them what you need to—

Interjection: It must have been Mike Harris's fault.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's absolutely no doubt Mike Harris's fault.

It challenges me, Speaker, because I think they need to look in the mirror. That's what I do every day, and say, "When I leave that House each day, did I do things that the people who sent me here would they be proud of me? Would I be proud of me?"

I'm not certain. Most of those people had no decision-making ability on this. They probably weren't even consulted, and now they have to stand there. They can go home and say to their taxpayers—the people who are or are not going to return them to this House—that they did the right thing; they did the honourable thing.

Speaker, I need to share with you—this isn't just me. This is a constituent of mine, Andre from Owen Sound: "The release by Chris Bentley of some documents regarding the Oakville gas plant got my attention. The Liberals know they could not possibly reveal another \$200-million screw-up. If I am right, they will fight releasing the specifics with more energy than the Samsung details. My wife, a lifelong third-generation Liberal, said to me, 'McGuinty should be forced to resign.' Ontario cannot take any more of this." That's a constituent's words, Mr. Speaker, not mine, and unsolicited, I might add.

This government is contemptuous. They seem to think they're above the law, using words like "bogus motion," which you in fact ruled was a legitimate motion. They think they have the right to just govern as they wish. They forget that the people of Ontario sent them a very strong minority message: "Go there and do the right things. You're starting to mess up. In fact, you've done a lot of mess-ups. You need to go there and do better. You need to be held accountable."

The Minister of Health said in this chamber that if it is the will of the people, we will form and set up a select committee on Ornge. We're still waiting for that, Speaker. Not only are we waiting for that committee; we're waiting for every committee that we have. And they have the gall to tell us that we are holding up legislation; we are holding up this House. The people need to know the truth. This spin cannot go on. The Premier has not even appeared, and says, "I'm above it. I'm not coming to your committee." The standing committee is still waiting for him to appear so that we can get to the bottom of the truth.

The HST: There was a vote in this House. My colleagues from the third party and our party in the opposition voted and defeated the Liberals on the HST. But did they listen to us? Did they move that legislation forward? No, Speaker, they did not. That is contempt.

I offer another constituent, Jim from Owen Sound, who I believe says it well: "I just want to say, in regard to the recent decision by the Liberal Party to move the gas-fired plant that was well into construction and has been cancelled and will now be moved east, that it looks to me that it was only done for political gain and to buy Liberal voters to gain seats. I hope the opposition pushes for a criminal investigation into this travesty of a waste of taxpayer money; money that should be repaid by the Liberal Party if found guilty. This supposed \$40-million move is going to wind up costing Ontario taxpayers \$100 million to \$200 million. I hope the contempt motion goes through."

Speaker, you wonder why there's such apathy of the voter. You know, their political skin is more important

than the needs of their constituents. They suggest they are here to present and represent and provide services. How, in good conscience, can they, while continually wasting billions of dollars, go back to their taxpayers and say, "I'm doing the right thing for you?" Think of health care. Think of the knee replacements, the cataract surgeries, the MRIs that are not going to happen. Think of the kids who aren't going to get the services, those handicapped kids and mentally challenged kids who need services and counselling that won't go because we go and say, "Sorry, there's no money at the trough."

Just think of the contempt and the blank pages. After we had to force them, they sent documents upon documents. My colleague Mr. Fedeli from Nipissing just randomly pulled out a sheaf of papers and started to turn them. The bulk of them were blank, whited out or redacted. That's not being sincere: "We want to work together and do things and move forward." That's contempt for this House. It's contempt for the people of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. It's simply unacceptable.

If they were really sincere, the Liberals would not have sent blank, whited-out and redacted documents. You know, it's becoming a trend of hiding. Think eHealth. Think Ornge. The Minister of Health stood here and said, "We've changed." Think of the reporting we had to do. Think about how they've changed reporting for Ornge. Everything beyond the first line is hidden. It's hidden in documents, Mr. Speaker, that we can't even get access to. Then again, if we had that select committee, we'd still be trying to get to the bottom of that on behalf of the Ontario taxpayer.

I also want to bring to light that a taxpayer, Nigel from Durham—and he has already sent this, actually, to Dalton McGuinty, Chris Bentley, Dwight Duncan, Tim Hudak, Andrea Horwath, myself, Scott Stinson, Johnathan Jenkins, John Tory, Steve Paikin and Ryan MacDonald, so I'm not sharing anything here that isn't public. He is very, very distressed, and in fact sent a letter to Yasir Naqvi, the president of the Liberal Party of Ontario:

"Dear Mr. Naqvi:

"Please find attached an invoice issued on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario for \$259,900,000, inclusive of HST." Now, this is not a prop and this is not a joke. This man was very serious and took his time—and he goes on to elaborate all the reasons. He uses words that concern me as well: "Failure to remit payment will result in contributing to an already dangerously high annual deficit and accumulated provincial public debt which your regime already managed to double as a result of fiscal mismanagement and incompetence since assuming office." You know, it's scary. "Unfortunately, our democracy seemingly does not require the same guiding moral principles in the public sector as it does in the private sector."

Mr. Speaker, I had hoped to present both these letters directly to the Premier and the finance minister, just in case somehow it got caught up in the snail mail. But if I could, I'll have a page direct those to their offices, since they are not able to accept it hand-delivered by me today.

Mr. Speaker, I go on and on. This is just the hypocrisy of democracy. They continually say, when they stand to rise, that we are holding up—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw, Speaker.

They continually say that we're holding up the House. I need to remind them, unfortunately, that they are the government. They have the ability to set up committees. They have the ability to move things through this House. It is they who are holding up democracy, not this side of the House—neither the opposition nor the third party.

I'm afraid to use that word again, Speaker, but I have to. They said, "We listened to the people of Oakville, and we listened to the people of Mississauga." Well, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, and if you look at the electoral map from the last election, they sure aren't listening to rural Ontario and they certainly aren't listening to the people of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound who have said, "We do not want these expensive, experimental wind turbines in our backyard."

What about the horse racing industry, Mr. Speaker? "We listen. We really want to listen and do the right thing." Well, they're decimating an industry and taking 30,000 to 60,000 jobs with them. Speaker, it's just unfathomable that they can say that with a straight face and actually have it recorded in Hansard for people to hear and read many years from today.

All they need to do is step backwards and truly speak with sincere words, "We want to work together. We want to do the right things," rather than trying to cling and hang on to power. This rhetoric of working together—a Liberal campaign team made this decision, not even democratically elected representatives. Those unfortunate people who aren't in the main cabinet probably weren't even aware of this. Now they have to defend it. It's unfathomable.

1520

Interjection: Who's steering the ship?

Mr. Bill Walker: Who is steering the ship? Absolutely.

The poor caucus members over there—they weren't probably even asked for their opinion, and now they have to stand in this House, and more importantly, they have to go back to their home ridings and stand in front of those people who truly will be their judge and say, "Yes, I support exactly what your government did. I support you and your government wasting \$640 million of my hard-earned taxpayers' money." Speaker, I'm glad it's them and not me, because in good conscience, I couldn't do it.

They continually stand here, again, and suggest that we're dishonouring their member. In fact, I think most of us hold Minister Bentley in high regard. The unfortunate part is, as many in this House have said, they've thrown him under the bus. They're all standing, espousing—it's like he's gone. It's like they've already found him guilty and now they're trying to backpedal and soft-pedal as

much as they can to save their own tarnished image, not his. They're not sincere in his image; they're trying to save the Liberal brand, and that's inappropriate, because he is a good man.

What I find interesting is, now current Economic Development Minister Duguid just seems to be sliding through all this. He's not here. He's not having to stand up and defend any of this message—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to remind the member that it's inappropriate to make reference to the absence of any member in the House during the course of debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: My apologies, Speaker. I withdraw. I didn't really realize—that just slipped out, Speaker.

But, you know, he is sliding through all this. He was the one that was on that file when these decisions were made. He is the one that should be taking the heat right beside Mr. Bentley, at the very most. What about our finance minister? This is a guy who has doubled our debt in eight years. It took the rest of Confederation—what he has unfortunately done in eight years. He's going to have a \$411-billion deficit staring him in the face, and they want to stand in this House and say, "We got you a \$40-million deal, and it's a darn good one, too." Come on. These people have to be held accountable as well. I don't want us to walk out of this chamber without those two people having their hands in that cookie jar and getting rapped just as much as anyone else.

Then I go on to waste—\$650 million and climbing. How many nurses? How many long-term-care beds? How many home care visits, MRIs, hip surgeries? How many special-needs kids could have been helped? How many people with mental health could have been helped, Speaker, if we had this? Orme—we just keep going. There's a bit of a trend here. We're wasting billions on gas plants. We're wasting millions and billions on Orme and eHealth and the Green Energy Act. Let me not even get started on what that's going to cost us over the next 20 years. Right now we spent, in the last year, half a billion. We paid the States and Quebec to take our surplus energy, and yet they're—"Damn the torpedoes, we're going straight ahead because we made this." Have a little bit of civility. Be humble and step back and say, "We've messed up yet again, and we'll turn"—

Mr. Todd Smith: Fess up.

Mr. Bill Walker: Fess up and mess up.

In my own home riding, the great residents of Markdale and area fundraised for \$13 million. For six or eight years, that money's been sitting in the bank for a new hospital. It's basically crumbling around them, and they come to the minister—I accompanied them to the minister at ROMA, and what she said was, "I'm sorry, but there's no money." Well, how do you explain that to those hard-working people who gave of their sweat equity, their savings, whatever they had to do to support their local hospital, because health care is so important? And you say to them, "There's no money, but we'll just slip this \$650-million boondoggle under the thing and just drive on, because we want to talk about the healthy homes renovation tax credit?"

Good God, Speaker. People are having a hard time paying their hydro bills, their heating bills. Now this is going to be added on to their bills yet again, and they have the audacity to say, "We have no money but we're doing great things for you. Let's look at our record." Speaker, come on, let's be serious. They're decimating the horse-racing industry. Hanover Raceway, in my riding, is probably going to end up closing because of, again, a decision that was made without any thought process, without any conscience of what the real—and then they have this disingenuous thought: Health care or horses? How disingenuous can you even be?

The Derby school is in fear of being closed right now. You know why, Speaker? Because they don't have enough money to pay the bills. The government told them they need to look at it and shut down. Well, what if we had just a smidgen of this \$650-million waste—and climbing? What if we had the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle? What if we had the eHealth money that they've wasted over the last years?

Interjection: OLG.

Mr. Bill Walker: OLG—it's almost laughable, if it wasn't so severe and shocking to the people that have to pay the freight.

Many people in my riding are barely hanging on. We're saying that we have to cut back our teachers, but yet they're going out and wasting \$650 million and trying to make it look good—that they're onside; that we're the bad people obstructing this House and holding up progress. It's absolutely—it is contemptible. They're out of touch.

A couple of speakers this afternoon—and I won't name them, because they'll probably have to answer to their own taxpayers—they're talking about the healthy homes renovation tax credit. So I can get that \$20 grab bar; that won't even pay the freight on what this year's tax bill is going to be for the first part of this boondoggle. They're talking about the healthy homes renovation tax credit as being the pillar of their whole mantra. What about \$640 million? That's what the people of my riding are saying—not one person has come to me saying they want this healthy homes renovation whatever it is. They're talking about \$640 million being wasted and how they're going to pay.

They talk about, "I want this to be a better place; I want to work with the opposition and the third party to do better things." Well, this is not the way to show it, Speaker. They need to be stepping up; they need to be admitting that they made terrible, terrible financial decisions. They're not competent to manage this province anymore, and they need to fess up.

The Don Valley East member said, "We're going to be agents of change." Well, I can tell you, they've accomplished that goal. They've changed this province from being the absolute engine of the economy to being the laggards that have to continually go to the table—to the feds—with their hand out. It's absolutely disgusting and the reason why most of us stepped up and said we will run for office, because we need to turn this province around.

It's all about trust and integrity, and I think they're lacking on that side. It's all about open transparency and accountability. They haven't apologized one iota for this. They haven't made any amends. You can't get integrity and trust and accountability without taking those actions.

Speaker, they are in contempt, and they are even in contempt for challenging your ruling. You offered that this was a legitimate ruling, and they continually stand on that side of the House and argue that you made a bad decision—unacceptable. Two different thought processes, contradicting themselves, hypocrisy and waste—the unending waste that they continue with is one thing that is unacceptable. We'll stand here as long as we have to to defend it.

Interjection:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I must once again ask the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Mr. Bill Walker: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate. I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today to speak to the motion moved by the member from Cambridge, which directs the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to table immediately with the Clerk of the House all remaining documents ordered by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012; and

That the matter of the Speaker's finding of a *prima facie* case of privilege, with respect to the production of documents by the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to the Standing Committee on Estimates, be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs...; and

That the committee be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair, and shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012.

The Speaker ruled that the motion that the member from Cambridge moved is debatable and amendable and that it has precedence over and will displace consideration of all regular business until it's disposed of.

Speaker, I will be voting against this motion, and I'm disappointed that this motion has displaced the regular business of the Legislature. We're not discussing, as I would have hoped we would, some of the important legislation to improve public services here in Ontario.

Last week, we were supposed to have third reading on the healthy homes renovation tax credit, something that would, if passed, improve Ontarians' lives and help our seniors. I was eager to vote on that important piece of legislation.

As well, we've been unable to discuss the Family Caregiver Leave Act in the Legislature, which would, if passed, provide job-protected leave to help hard-working Ontarians care for ailing family members, but that legislation is also not moving forward either.

The point of the debate this week and last week is due to the fact that there were discussions in front of the estimates committee about the cancellation of two planned gas plants—appropriate discussions—and the

fact that the Minister of Energy was asked to provide certain documents. The Minister of Energy did not refuse outright. He brought forward concerns that many of these documents had in fact the potential to negatively impact and violate solicitor-client privileges as negotiations related to the Oakville power plant and its potential location were being discussed, and that to release these documents of a commercially sensitive nature had the potential to cost taxpayers significantly more money and jeopardize those negotiations. The Minister of Energy argued that the issue was not whether the information would be released but when.

In fact, the Auditor General of Ontario said on September 5 in public accounts: "My sense on the Oakville one"—meaning the Oakville power plant—"is that it could very well be that some of this information could be subject to client-solicitor privilege, or even if we were to get it"—the documents—"in my opinion, it could be damaging to the province's negotiating position."

1530

There was considerable debate at committee. The Chair himself, the member from Beaches-East York, in fact acknowledged that there were competing interests. Ultimately, the Speaker made a ruling that there were commercial confidences at play and that there was solicitor-client privilege at play. He realized that although the committee had an absolute right to those documents, there needed to be an opportunity for House leaders to sit down, discuss the matter and move forward.

On September 25, this House was advised that the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority had, as required, tabled documents related to the Oakville and Mississauga power plants. There were attestations, signed by Colin Andersen, chief executive officer of Ontario Power Authority, and the Minister of Energy, pointing out that all documents that were requested were produced. Letters of transmittal from both the minister and the OPA indicate that what was tabled comprised all documents responsive to the May 16 request of the Standing Committee on Estimates. It would appear that the House is now in receipt of all those requisite documents.

Speaker, I'm saddened that we're actually debating a motion of contempt for any member of this House but particularly for the highly respected and distinguished member for London West, and a distinguished member of the legal profession. I believe in a tradition that believes that when a member of this Legislature says something in the House, their word is accepted. All members of this House swear an oath of office, and members of the executive council swear an additional oath to be vigilant, diligent and circumspect in the performance of their duties. The Minister of Energy has served honestly and faithfully and to the best of his ability. His position has always been to act in the best interests of Ontario.

A member's word is truth in this Legislature. That is something that goes back generation after generation. I believe that what is at stake are the traditions of this Legislature. It's about the fact that we recognize that

each of us here is an honourable member who is doing his best; that when each of us stands in this place, appears before a committee or tables correspondence in this House, it reflects the truth. It's about the fact that we've met all the requests of the Standing Committee on Estimates and we have met the ruling of the Speaker.

The opposition, as is its right, demanded to have produced documents related to the relocation of the proposed natural-gas-fired electricity plants, which spokespersons for both opposition parties agreed should not be built. Speaker, it's my understanding that there were discussions at House leaders' meetings, not on whether the Speaker's ruling to produce the documents would be sustained, but on how to do so, and whether commercially sensitive documents, vetted by experts in commercial law and by opposition representatives, might be delayed until such time as agreement with the company might be reached.

Instead, the opposition wanted much more. I think in this case they chose to denigrate the reputation of a member of the government, an individual who has served this Legislature extremely well, a person who is a distinguished member of the legal profession in the province of Ontario, widely respected in that regard, and someone who has fought for fairness and for due process his whole professional career.

There are lots of motions that are quite legitimate in this House, but when motions of this kind come forward that are personally directed at someone, I think it leads to the breakdown of the Legislature and the way it functions best for all of us. I don't think they're particularly productive. I don't think they're good for the democratic system.

I think I've watched over the last few years and months a deterioration of how this Legislature functions. When I see motions of this kind come forward, I get worried. I see other motions that I think are quite legitimate, and I can see that the debate will be robust in this House on many occasions. But when I see these kinds of motions, which are so very personal—for instance, a motion of contempt—then I think of the member of the Conservative caucus when they asked their questions when question period was still occurring, when they pointed out that the Minister of Energy—they were gladdened by what the consequences of a contempt motion could be to his political career and his legal profession career.

Speaker, I'm not a lawyer, and I would venture to guess that a number of speakers I have heard in this debate who have spoken to this motion are not lawyers either, yet many of the members appear to have aspirations to that career and that profession. Members of the standing committees have extraordinary powers to subpoena and to summon witnesses, and they can compel those witnesses to submit evidence in the form of records or documents in order to assist them in their deliberations. I've been struggling with the debate I hear in this House because I fear a rush to judgment by a group of people with the power of a court with none of the checks and balances.

I must say that in my own riding, my personal policy is not to attack the opponent. I'm proud of that record and of the respect and the friendships that I've been able to accumulate over the years—people like Premier Bill Davis. I remember the first time I spoke to Premier Davis. It was in November 2003. The phone rang on election night. I picked up the receiver and I spoke to the person on the other end, and it was Bill Davis. He was offering his congratulations on my having won my seat in my first provincial run—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize. The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, 19(b): “The ruling of a Speaker is not debatable.” The Speaker has ruled there has been a breach of privilege. That is not debatable in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): As a matter of fact, the Speaker has ruled that a *prima facie* case of privilege has been established. It is up to the House to make the final decision. That's why we're debating this motion.

I return to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you, Speaker.

I remember that evening in November 2003 when Mr. Davis called me. He's an icon in our community and across Canada, and his name graces our local courthouse. He was the longest-serving Premier of Ontario, and there he was, making a personal call to me, a Liberal, to offer his genuine congratulations and advice on the new role that I was about to assume.

I'd never met anyone like Mr. Davis, an individual who sees politics as an honourable calling and manages to cross party lines effortlessly, making friends and developing strong alliances wherever he goes. Over the years, I've learned how much Mr. Davis and I have in common through our informal chats. We both want what's best for Brampton and Ontario. He has generously continued to offer advice, and he calls me quite regularly. I see him at a variety of events, and whenever he gets the opportunity, he finds a way to point out publicly how philosophically misguided I am.

He's a brilliant politician with a great sense of timing once he's given a microphone. Mr. Davis is someone I respect. He recently celebrated 50 years of public service. Over the last few years, I've learned how diplomatic he is, how extraordinarily gifted he is in remembering details about events that have shaped our province. He's a gentle man. He's very humble about his accomplishments.

Mr. Davis is the kind of politician I aspire to be some day. He's a true pragmatist in the sense that he seeks opportunities to join good policy with good politics. As a member of provincial Parliament, Mr. Davis earned the respect of Bramptonians, and he has had the honour to represent them. Later, when he served as Premier, Ontarians from across this province came not only to respect him but to genuinely like him, which explains his popularity as a speaker.

When I look at the career of the Minister of Energy, I consider him also to be a man of great integrity like Mr. Davis, not only in the House but in his personal life and in his legal profession. He served as the Attorney General of this province for four years—a very difficult job. He has been a well-respected and honourable member of this Legislature for nine years. Before he came to this place, he was a member of the Ontario bar, the legal profession, of the highest standing and reputation over the past quarter-century. He opened community law clinics, and he taught law classes in his spare time. I've watched him debate, in caucus and in cabinet, and he's very measured and thoughtful in the arguments that he puts forward.

The unfortunate nature of the debate around this motion is that it has become personal, causing pain and anguish to the minister's family, and for that, I am truly saddened. It's not the kind of politics I signed up for. The Minister of Energy has conducted himself with integrity, and he deserves our respect, which I know this side of the House has for him.

I think it's time to elevate the level of debate, which used to be the hallmark of this Legislature. The people of Ontario expect us to work together and put forward positive new ideas. They want us to find a way to keep working, always in their best interests. While strong partisan debate is part of a healthy democracy, the mean-spirited and groundless accusations I've heard over the last few days that have been made against my colleague the Minister of Energy are not. The Minister of Energy is one of the most decent and honourable colleagues I've ever had the honour to work with. He's a man of great integrity. Every day he works hard to do the right thing for Ontarians. What the opposition is trying to do to the Minister of Energy dishonours them and it dishonours this Legislature.

1540

As honourable members, our job is to do the work for the people, and for nine years we've done that as the government. We haven't done everything perfectly. It's a democracy and it's right for people to ask questions, and no one can question that we give our best. We all work hard every day here. We all try to listen. We learn and we keep moving forward.

In the spirit of putting forward positive suggestions, it's my understanding that the government has informed the Speaker and the House that we intend to move a substantive amendment, an amendment that would make the motion more acceptable. I know we're debating a sub-amendment right now, Mr. Speaker, but I must say, I wish we could get on with dealing more with substantive changes to the motion.

I believe more substantive changes would improve this motion and hopefully allow us to get on with the important business that the people of Ontario expect and are counting on us to move forward with.

Speaker, the fact of the matter is, this is a very simple situation. Documents were requested, flags were raised, the debate and the discussion ensued and the documents in their entirety have been provided to this Legislature.

It's time to put this matter before us. It's time to acknowledge and support the traditions of hundreds and hundreds of years of parliamentary traditions that have built in this House. It's time to move on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: A number of speakers have mentioned this, but it really is unfortunate that we're having to debate this motion for so many days because there are so many things that we should be spending our time on. It's sad, really, but unfortunately sadly necessary because we need to make sure the people understand what this government has been up to with their tax dollars, and \$650 million have been wasted in the process.

It's almost become commonplace for scandals to hit this government, with one after the other after the other. I think the people of Ontario have gotten a little bit injured to it. It's almost like that's what they're expecting, but they shouldn't have to expect that. They deserve better from their government. We've had a government demonstrating complete indifference to their well-being and feeling that they can do anything they want with impunity as long as it wins them the next election.

We've seen the spectacle of eHealth. The scandal now stands at \$2.4 billion, and we still have yet to see any indication of a working system of electronic medical records. We hear the Minister of Health talk about the fact that a number—millions—of Ontarians have electronic health records. All that means, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that they have digitized health records that are still sitting in their doctors' offices. They're not connecting it to anything. They're not connecting to hospitals; they're not connecting to pharmacies; they're not connecting to anything else. We have a situation where we've got billions of dollars being spent with nothing to show for it.

The Ornge scandal has yet to be tallied, but it's going to cost taxpayers at least \$300 million, and there's still some question, unfortunately, about whether some people have paid for this with their lives. Unfortunately, we're still waiting to find that out from the coroner.

As if the public needed any further evidence of this government's disregard for their tax dollars, the tab for cancelling the two gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville so far has come in at \$640 million—all of that just to save two Liberal seats.

It's a privilege to be chosen by your community to represent them here at Queen's Park and to be charged with the responsibility of spending tax dollars in a responsible manner. But this government has yet to make it through one year, since last year's election, without abusing that privilege.

Perhaps the most unfortunate feature of these scandals is that the McGuinty Liberals fought the public at every step of the way, trying to cover up the scandals they've created. They've blanked-out, whited-out or redacted thousands of documents. They've told the media—and, sadly, their own constituents—that this is a good deal for them. They've billed Ontarians hundreds of millions of

dollars for a decision that they admit was made mid-election, in consultation with the campaign team, to save their seats—not out of a sense of what's good public policy but simply as a seat-saver. So, I think that there's something that we need to bring forward that deals with the question of privilege.

I'd just like to read from the statement that was made by the Speaker on September 13, on the issue of what the system of privilege was, what was being claimed and how this government really has no right to have prevented all the documents from coming to the public's attention by whitening them out, by simply ignoring them, by not allowing them to be brought forward. This is what was said in the Speaker's statement on September 13 of this year:

"On May 30, the minister responded to the request" for disclosure "by indicating that it would not be appropriate to disclose the correspondence because the files were confidential and because many of them were either subject to solicitor-client or litigation privilege or else highly commercially sensitive; their disclosure would tend to prejudice ongoing negotiations and litigation. The Ontario Power Authority responded in a similar vein on the same day."

Then it goes on and we come to the Speaker's ruling declaring that there was a *prima facie* case of privilege. He said this:

"In practice, standing committees may encounter situations where the authors of or officials responsible for papers refuse to provide them or are willing to provide them only after certain parts have been removed. Public servants and ministers may sometimes invoke their obligations under certain legislation to justify their position. Companies may be reluctant to release papers which could jeopardize their industrial security or infringe upon their legal obligations, particularly with regard to the protection of personal information. Others have cited solicitor-client privilege in refusing to allow access to legal papers or notices.

"These types of situations have absolutely no bearing on the power of committees to order the production of papers and records. No statute or practice diminishes the fullness of that power rooted in House privileges unless there is an explicit legal provision to that effect, or unless the House adopts a specific resolution limiting the power. The House has never set a limit on its power to order the production of papers and records. However, it may not be appropriate to insist on the production of papers and records in all cases."

Then it goes through and indicates some situations where it might not be appropriate to produce these public records or documents in certain situations. But, again quoting from the Speaker's ruling, "In the case at hand, the Standing Committee on Estimates made a production order despite the arguments made by the minister. My response to the government House leader's claim that the committee did not turn its mind to the reasons for non-production proffered by the minister is,

"—First, it was not obliged to do so.

“—Second, the documents could have been offered to the committee under conditions that would both satisfy the needs of the committee and the minister: for instance, being received in a closed session without public disclosure, or in an acceptably redacted version. The Chair put forward this notion on one occasion, and it was passed by without comment by any member.

“—Third, the government House leader in his written submission repeatedly points to what a difference a clear motion would have made to the Minister of Energy’s ability to fully respond to the committee’s request; that is, a motion that explicitly expressed the committee’s request even for documents that are highly commercially sensitive, for which solicitor-client privilege is claimed and/or are subject to litigation privilege. It is claimed that the minister could have and would have complied in that scenario. During the time in question, the minister could have requested the committee to pass just such a motion, making it explicit that it still demanded the requested documents, notwithstanding the minister’s wish to withhold disclosure for reasons stated in his May 30 reply to the committee’s original request. The record does not show that the minister proactively did so.

“The Standing Committee on Estimates was unquestionably entitled to request the documents sought from the Minister of Energy, and in the end the minister had an obligation to comply with the committee’s call for those documents. The committee did not accept the minister’s reasons for withholding the document and persisted in its demand during an extended period of time.

“I am therefore satisfied that a *prima facie* case of privilege has been established.”

But that’s not what happened. We still ended up with a government that was refusing to bring these documents forward, and it’s very clear from the Speaker’s ruling that there was no factual way, no legal basis on which they could have done so. So I think, at the end, what we really should be expecting from the McGuinty Liberals is an apology—actually, several apologies. I’m asking them to apologize for three things in particular.

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First, I think they should be apologizing to the people of Ontario for privileging political gain over the well-being of the province they were elected to serve. This decision does not serve the purposes of building a stronger, better Ontario. It’s a decision that would see families, single parents and Ontario’s next generation foot the bill in order to see the Liberals win another election, and that certainly speaks to the true character of this government, I would say. It would rather see them re-elected than to spend tax dollars in a way that would benefit all Ontarians.

Secondly, I believe the Liberal House leader should apologize to Ontarians for telling them that the Liberals had provided all of the documents and that none of them had been redacted. The House leader, again, stated: “There was absolutely nothing redacted” from the documents. Well, I think we’ve heard, from the comments that have been made by many members of this House,

particularly the member from Nipissing, who tried to read into the record some of the responses that we received, but page after page was either whited-out or totally redacted—we all know it’s untrue, and we believe that the House leader should apologize to the people of Ontario for this.

Third, the people of this province, I believe, need an apology from the Minister of Energy. We’ve heard a lot about the character of the Minister of Energy and how we are apparently sullying his character—

Interjection.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Absolutely not the case, I would say to the minister opposite. I would say that I do know the Minister of Energy to be an upstanding person of very strong character. He’s a fine lawyer, and as a member of the legal profession, I can say that he is very well regarded in the legal community. However, his own party has hung him out to dry in this situation. He’s been the subject of all kinds of criticism from all kinds of people, and yet the members on the other side say they’re standing up for him, all the while talking about how we are the ones that are bringing him down. It’s his own party that’s doing that by hanging him out to dry and leaving him to take the blame for this monumental boondoggle of \$650 million wasted.

The apology that we would expect from the Minister of Energy is to apologize for withholding the documents from the Legislature and deliberately trying to cover this up from not only the members of this Legislature, but the people of Ontario. He should also be apologizing for telling Ontarians that the cost of cancelling the gas plants was “a ... good deal for taxpayers.” Really, how can that possibly be the case? The minister must fully know that this is absolutely not the case. This could not be a good deal for taxpayers. Throwing \$650 million to the wind isn’t good for anybody—and that could be used for a lot of things. This could be used for many things in health care—certainly something that I hear about both in my riding and as the PC health critic. I hear from people all the time in my riding about how they’re unable to find a family doctor; how they’re unable to find home care for their parents; how they’re unable to find a long-term-care placement; how they’re unable to access emergency services, including emergency mental health and addiction services; how people with developmental issues are not able to find services in my community and how we don’t have a plan for that; how we need to have a plan for jobs and the economy; how we’ve got 600,000 Ontarians out of work right now. We’re not seeing any of that come from this government—nothing at all. We’re just seeing waste after waste after waste of tax dollars.

Instead of having new power plants, taxpayers will have spent \$640 million, which is going to be tacked on to the province’s \$300-billion debt—\$300 billion and growing. We’ve got a deficit right now of \$15 million, and that’s going to double in the next year unless drastic action is taken by this government. But again, we see no indication they’re prepared to do anything.

This weekend, the Liberals had their convention, and a lot of speeches were being made, including one from the

Premier. The Premier didn't have a whole lot to say, other than a bunch of platitudes. He said, "We've come a long way together. Only one way to go, now: forward. For families. For hope. For Ontario." Well, I would suggest to the Premier: You'd better get going, because there's no hope for a lot of Ontarians. We're in a very bad situation, with 600,000 people out of work. Hardly compelling words from the Premier—also, completely devoid of substance and ignoring the billions his government has wasted under his tenure as Premier. What does the Premier have to say about the \$4 billion his government has accumulated in scandal-related spending? Well, he's decided to spend millions of dollars on friendly eHealth consultants instead of building a patient-centred health care system. He's decided to spend millions lining the pockets of strategists and consultants instead of developing a world-class air ambulance service.

We hope that the hearings into the Ornge scandal will come forward, that we will get the committees settled in this Legislature soon, because there's much more to come, Mr. Speaker. We've barely seen the tip of the iceberg in the Ornge matter. There are so many more questions that have yet to be answered.

The Ornge scandal saw Liberal insiders develop a complex legal scheme to hide millions of tax dollars and a communications scheme to conceal it instead of protecting Ontarians and saving lives. Now the Premier himself is using the public purse to save his political career, billing Ontarians \$640 million for a couple of seats in Mississauga and Oakville.

Beyond these scandals, we've seen unprecedented public sector growth, unprecedented increases in spending, unprecedented unemployment numbers, and an economic decline—all under the Liberals' so-called economic stewardship. Ontarians deserve to know what the Premier has to say about the doubling of debt that has occurred under his watch and the billions we now spend on interest payments. I think it has been said before, but it's worth saying again, Mr. Speaker: With the money we are spending right now on interest payments, we're spending \$10 billion a year on money that we've borrowed in order to keep this government going. It's the third-largest expenditure in government after health and education, and it's probably going to increase because this government shows no sign of stopping with their unprecedented spending.

But that money could go a long way towards delivering health care, towards improving our justice system, towards building infrastructure, towards job creation, getting people back to work. Ontarians deserve to know how this government and this Premier plan to put 600,000 people back to work. Where are his plan for job creation and his plan for economic growth?

You're not going to hear anything about that. What you will hear are carefully crafted speeches meant to take your attention away from the scandal and Ontario's fiscal crisis and towards the brighter future that he's been promising for the last decade but that certainly we haven't seen any indication is coming any time soon.

Mr. John O'Toole: Going downhill, not uphill.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Yes. As my colleague says, we're heading downhill, not uphill, and we're going fast.

The reality is that things keep getting harder and harder for the people in this province. It's harder for families to make ends meet, and we're getting into a worse and worse economic situation.

We've already had several credit downgrades. We know that the international credit rating agencies and bond rating agencies are literally breathing down the neck of Ontario, waiting to see what this government is going to do in order to move forward and to bring economic health back to this province. But we're still holding our breath, and frankly, I'm not expecting too much.

Meanwhile, the Ontario PC Party, on our side of things, is not sitting back and letting things slide. We've proposed bold new ideas to create jobs and to kick-start our economy. I'm proud of what we've done on our team. We've focused on lowering the costs of doing business by cutting taxes, red tape and hydro bills, becoming partners to businesses rather than policing them. We've heard from business after business about how the red tape and regulation that this government has imposed over the last 10 years is literally killing them, putting them out of business and forcing them to go to other jurisdictions. And that's just counting, Mr. Speaker, the businesses that we have now. What about the businesses that never even looked at Ontario as a jurisdiction in which to do business, the businesses from international jurisdictions that are looking to locate in North America, in Ontario, in another province in Canada or in the United States? Because of, among other things, the high cost of energy, high corporate taxes, the high cost of doing business with the red tape and regulations, a lot of them are just saying, "Forget about Ontario. We're going to go to Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia or a US jurisdiction."

We've got to turn that around. That's why we think it's so important that we bring provincial regulations into the 21st century, developing, among other things, labour laws that reflect the needs of business in 2012—not, as our leader, Tim Hudak, has mentioned, labour laws that were designed for the 1940s.

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We've also talked about reforming health care. We've proposed the elimination of LHINs and putting money into front-line health care instead of expensive bureaucratic administration. Mr. Speaker, the Ontario PC caucus and members of the opposition stand in solidarity with hard-working Ontarians and taxpayers. We believe it's a privilege to be elected to this House and a duty which demands that individuals ask themselves what is in the best interests of Ontarians, not what is in the best interests of your party.

The Liberals have failed in this duty time and time again. They failed when they tried to cover up the billions wasted at eHealth, they failed when they tried to cover up millions of dollars wasted at Ornge and they failed when they tried to cover up the latest scandal, buying seats at the taxpayers' expense.

Mr. Steve Clark: Shame.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It is shameful. We really need to turn the corner. We need to bring transparency and accountability back into government. We need to take a look at the latest decisions that have been made with respect to the power plants. Locating a power plant in eastern Ontario when we need power west of Toronto makes no sense. No matter how they try to slice and dice it, it makes absolutely no sense. They talk about how it's only going to cost \$40 million to build the plant there. Absolute nonsense. You've got \$200 million worth of transmission lines that you're going to have to build to have any hope of bringing that power to where you really need it.

Instead of creating policy based on good, sound public policy—what you need, energy where you need it—we're creating a situation where we're just locating it somewhere that suits their purposes, that makes them able to crawl out from under a scandal, hopefully untarnished from their position. But what we as the official opposition were elected to do here is bring this government to account. That's what we intend to do, and that's why we believe this motion is so important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon. I, too, have sat here and listened to members from the other side with their version—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to be able to hear the member for Oakville. I'll ask the official opposition to come to order. If they don't allow the member for Oakville to give his remarks, I'm going to have to take more direct action.

I'll return to the member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker, I was going to start my speech another way, but I think I'll read something instead, if you don't mind. It says:

"Despite requests from the Oakville community, the Liberal government has not changed the location of the proposed Oakville generating station.

"Ontario's Ministry of the Environment recognizes that Oakville-Clarkson airshed is taxed and incapable of accepting additional pollutant loadings.

"In June 2010, this concern was echoed by Dr. David Balsillie in his action plan for the Oakville-Clarkson airshed. In his fourth recommendation, Dr. Balsillie wrote, 'All applications for certificates of approval for new or modified industrial activities which will increase emissions within the airshed must be considered in light of the current capacity of the airshed. This recommendation would also apply to the issuance of a certificate of approval for the power plant.'

"While the Liberal government remains silent on Dr. Balsillie's recommendations, Halton residents are living with the reality of a taxed airshed which may be unable to handle additional toxic pollutants from the proposed Oakville generating station.

"Haldimand county has expressed an interest in hosting this gas-fired power plant at the Nanticoke site, which provides a viable clean alternative.

"Therefore, today in the Ontario Legislature, Halton MPP Ted Chudleigh asked the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure: 'I have listened to the people of Oakville, and I agree with them. Will you listen to the people of Oakville, change your mind and move the location of this power plant? ...

"I am asking the minister to consider moving this plant. He has the facts. He has a clean alternative. If he adds a bit of common sense he'll see the location of his proposed power plant needs to change."

That's a news release from my colleague in the House, the member from Halton. When the community—his community and my community—was faced with a proposal that came from the Ontario Power Authority that an almost 1,000-megawatt natural-gas-fired power plant be located within 400 metres of daycare centres, of schools, of residences and shopping. I did what any other MPP would do in this House: I stood up and I supported my constituents. I took the concerns of the people of Oakville down to the decision-makers at Queen's Park, the same way that my colleague from Halton did in representing the people in his riding that live in north Oakville.

The advice that was given to the government of Ontario at that time, in my opinion, was flawed information. This was not a safe site, in my opinion. It was not a healthy site. It was a site that needed to be moved.

The residents at the time were also saying that the timetable that had been proposed by the Ontario Power Authority—that the energy was not needed within that time frame and, again, the advice that they had been given by the Ontario Power Authority was not the advice that the government should follow. I brought that information down to the people at Queen's Park here and spent a good year to a year and a half of my life trying to convince people that the people in my community of Oakville were right and that the people that had provided the information from the Ontario Power Authority had this site in the wrong location.

Go back a few years, before I was MPP for Oakville. The gentleman who was MPP for Oakville at this time occupied your seat, Mr. Speaker. That was Gary Carr, the member from Oakville at that time. He was faced with a similar situation. On Winston Churchill Drive, right on the border of Oakville, within hundreds of yards of residential communities, the party opposite proposed to put a 700- to 800-megawatt site. Mayor Burton was not mayor at that time. Mayor Burton was the head of a residents' association who knew that that site was wrong as well. He brought down 15,000 signatures to the government of the day and was told that wasn't enough: "We're not changing our mind. We don't care if it's a good site or not. We're building it."

In this case, what happened is that because of the lobbying of members in this House that the site be moved to a safer site, it was moved. The Premier of the day, the

Premier we have in this House today, Premier McGuinty, had the courage to make the right decision and move the site. There are members over there, Speaker, who would build this site in the same location today, and those members who know anything about the siting will know that that site would not qualify for a two-megawatt wind turbine, yet the rules at the time would allow for an almost 1,000-megawatt natural-gas-burning plant. It was simply time to take a second look at it.

The Premier of the day, I think, expressed the right sentiment. He said, "We're going to listen to the people who are directly affected by this. We've had information from the experts. In this case, we think that the information provided by the people from Oakville is a route we should follow." I think it was the right decision. I stand by that decision. I think the motion we are debating today that is trying to cast aspersions on the Minister of Energy at this time is simply ill-placed. I will not support it. I have nothing but respect for the Minister of Energy. I have nothing but respect for those who made this very courageous decision to move this plant based on the interests of constituents and not special interest groups.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: I am pleased to join this debate on the amendment to the amendment of my motion that I moved last week.

I want to say "congratulations." I've heard and listened intently to the debate that we've seen on this side of the House. I'm very proud of the comments that have been made by the members of my party in this debate. They are doing this issue justice. I want to thank them and congratulate them for what they've done.

You know, Mr. Speaker, five of my most favourite words in our Constitution are "peace, order and good government."

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mr. Rob Leone: That's right. People who know me know I like to enjoy a toast now and then to the good, fine words of "peace, order, and good government," but I think it's worthwhile to stop and think about why our founding fathers stopped at good government; why they didn't ask for great government, or why they didn't ask for, even further than that, perfect government.

1610

The reason we can't have perfect government is, if we had perfect government—a government that did everything that everybody wanted—we wouldn't have a need for democracy. We wouldn't have a need to have debate. We wouldn't have a need for an opposition to oppose that government. So our fathers of Confederation thought that good government was sufficient because perfect government is simply not attainable.

All governments make mistakes. Certainly when we were in government, I was proud of the accomplishments that we made: 1.1 million new jobs; we balanced the books; we paid down the debt. But also, Mr. Speaker, we would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge that even our

government—our good government—did in fact, make mistakes as well. These are mistakes that I know members of the government like to point out all too readily. When they have nothing good to say about themselves, they often point to the flaws of our own government, and I'm here to suggest that there were.

We made mistakes; we weren't perfect. Certainly the last time we talked about the Magna budget in this House, six days were devoted to a debate on the prima facie breach during the Magna budget. We know that during the Walkerton inquiry, where people died, we investigated the problems of Walkerton. The same thing went for Ipperwash, Mr. Speaker. These are certainly mistakes that our government have made, and we've had and made those mistakes part of our learning experience. They were humbling moments, moments when we actually acknowledged the fact that we were in fact not perfect.

During this debate, listening to members of this House, members of the government, talk about this experience in particular, there's not a word of contrition. There's not an apology. There's not an "I'm sorry" for squandering \$650 million of taxpayer money. They seem to approach this business—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: They're proud.

Mr. Rob Leone: —as something they can be proud of. In fact, they say this with pride and honour that they have squandered \$650 million—not to build new schools, roads or bridges, not to provide more cancer treatments or MRIs but to build absolutely no power plants; \$650 million simply squandered, Mr. Speaker. We can't, as members of this Legislature, reward that behaviour. We can't simply let this go untouched.

Mistakes do happen, and when they happen, it's the obligation of Her Majesty's loyal opposition to stand tall, to stand firm and demand accountability, demand responsibility of the faults of that government, and that's what we are doing here today. We're being honourable, we're being responsible and we're acting in the public interest.

I note that, in listening to the debate—and I've been paying very close attention to this debate, Mr. Speaker—the Liberal talking points are, in my view, exceptionally weak. I have listened with intent and interest to see what the Liberal members in this Legislature might say about this motion that we put forward. I have to say that I remain fundamentally disappointed in the members of the government and their complicit approach to the situation.

One of their favourite talking points is that the Minister of Energy is a good guy. I have no reason to believe that he's not. In fact, I know that he's been a distinguished member of this Legislature and has represented his constituents with honour.

But our members aren't talking about whether the Minister of Energy is a good guy. We're talking about the fact that 650 million tax dollars have been squandered to build absolutely no power plant. We're talking about the political motivation behind spending all of this money. We're talking about a government that's grown old, tired and has lost touch with the realities of hard-

working Ontario families. Most importantly, we're talking about a motion that's brought before this House because the government has not been truthful, or totally truthful, in releasing the documents that it has offered. Certainly, we've seen the documents, 36,000 pages, and we've gone through them. We note that there are gaps in time where no information is present. We note that the former Minister of Energy has not authored any documents related to power plants, power plants being one of the major issues in that ministry. How possible is it that the former Minister of Energy has not authored a single document? It also has been pointed out by members of the opposition that a lot of the pages are whited out, blacked out, redacted and not available for public viewing.

The reason why we're sitting in this Legislature today is that on May 16, the estimates committee demanded the truth. They demanded information that today, on October 1, we still don't have, and we're entitled to that truth, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, I didn't hear any government member talk about how they could have used that \$650 million better, if there were any projects in their constituencies that could have benefited from increased funds. I know they exist. I know the problems in Ontario are significant, where that money could have been used for a better purpose. But because we've used \$650 million of scarce money, those issues have gone unresolved.

I heard intently today the members for Windsor West and Don Valley East, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Labour talk eloquently about the Minister of Energy, but they failed to acknowledge—not even a word, not even an “I'm sorry” at the fact that they have squandered \$650 million of our tax money, the money that hard-working Ontario families give to this government to get some public services back. There was not even an act of contrition, Mr. Speaker, to say that this was wrong, that this should never be tolerated and that we should get to the bottom of this mess.

Even though we do find \$650 million and the vast amount of money that has been spent on this issue to be contemptuous—we certainly feel it's contemptuous and a lot of members of the opposition have spoken to this—I think what we have to remember and what we have to acknowledge is that it's not so much the value, although the value is important, but it's that this Legislature has been left in the dark, that we don't have the information available to us to hold that government to account. Accountability, transparency and responsible government—the hallmarks of our democratic institutions—have been ignored by a government that once again has become too tired and has lost touch with the realities of hard-working people.

Mr. Speaker, I noticed that on the weekend the Liberals had a love-in in Ottawa with their Premier, a Premier who has sat by while money has been squandered, while scandal after scandal has mounted, where we have these power plants, where we have Ornge, where we have eHealth, where billions of dollars have been lost for

no benefit to the public. And while he was at his love-in, talking about this issue, he impugned our reputation. He suggested that we were somehow acting dishonourably. That is something that's truly shameful, because if the Premier truly had great intentions about this institution, if he truly respected it, why did he choose Oakville and Ottawa to make these disparaging comments than sit in his chair and do that right here in this Legislature?

Funny how protecting the honour of this Legislature, the honour of this institution, is so important to this Premier. If that is the case, Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier allow this Legislature and that cabinet to be left in the dark about the moving of the Mississauga gas plant when that decision was made by his campaign team?

This is about respecting this Legislature, respecting the institutions that are the foundation of our democracy. We, as the opposition, have to stand tall and stand firm, to make sure that our democracy supersedes any political motivation by the government to keep us in the dark.

1620

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Leone: My colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex says that it's politics over people on that side of the House, and I can't disagree.

Mr. Speaker, another comment that the Liberals have consistently made is that somehow we are blocking legislative business from proceeding. What they fail to understand is that this is legislative business, and this matters to the people of the province of Ontario, who want to know exactly why they've kept us in the dark about \$650 million of tax money that's going to build absolutely nothing. This speaks to the heart of what we're supposed to do here. The heart of our legislative institution is to hold that government to account, yet they don't care. They think it's not important. Well, we're here today to say that this is important, and the people of Ontario deserve to know the truth.

I listened intently when the Minister of Health was making comments about me. Certainly, I understand the game of politics very well and know that I've drawn some attention to myself. She talks about my voting record, particularly with respect to the budget. She used the name of the Liberal candidate in Cambridge in this place—dishonourably, I think, but nevertheless she made the comment.

I want to be very clear to the people of Cambridge about this: I voted against a budget that allocated \$650 million to power plants that aren't going to be built, instead of building Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of examples in the province of Ontario where members in this House could make the same comment, but never has a member of the government stood up for their constituents and said, “I could have used that money better.” I know that each and every member of the opposition who stood and talked to this issue said that that money could have been put to better use, and it will be put to better use when we get rid of that government.

I want to mention something that I talked about earlier, when I moved this motion. In fact, this is a histor-

ic moment. We have been tasked with deciding something that hasn't been done in this Legislature for 104 years.

Someone came up to me to tell me that usually when you call a moment historic, it's historic for good reason, and how can we actually talk about this instance being historic when we see that money has been squandered, when a government is hiding from the truth, when the Legislature itself is left in the dark?

In a sense, that person is right. We were left in the dark. The government has squandered hundreds of millions of dollars. They're tired. They're out of touch. They don't know the realities of hard-working Ontario families.

But in another sense, this very much is a historic moment. This is a historic moment for this Legislature, because I believe that people will look upon this day as the day that the opposition took this Legislature back. This is the day that the people of Ontario will look upon our work here as taking power back from a government who thinks that they still control this place as if it was their own majority. They've grown tired. They've grown out of touch with the realities of hard-working families, families who work hard, who play by the rules—they balance their books. Ontarians demand better from their government, a government that's grown so out of touch with the realities. We have to say, as an opposition, that enough is enough.

Mr. Speaker, we've had fulsome debate on this issue. In fact, we've spent 24 hours. As such, I move that the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that I'm going to recess now to consider the question that I have to decide.

The House recessed from 1625 to 1644.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Given the fact that 66 members participated in this debate and the House has debated this matter for approximately 21.5 hours, I allow the motion to be put.

Mr. Leone has moved that the question now be put. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard many noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1645 to 1715.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Leone has moved that the question now be put. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table staff.

Clark, Steve
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Horwath, Andrea

MacLeod, Lisa
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick

Shurman, Peter
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table staff.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil

Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Naqvi, Yasir
Orazielti, David
Pinuzza, Teresa
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 53; the nays are 37.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

We will now deal with the main motion. On September 25, 2012, Mr. Leone moved that this House directs the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to table immediately with the Clerk of the House all remaining documents ordered by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012; and

That the matter of the Speaker's finding of a prima facie case of privilege, with respect to the production of documents by the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to the Standing Committee on Estimates, be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which is hereby reconstituted as it existed on September 9, 2012; and

That the committee shall be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair and shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

I wish to inform the members of the House that I have received from the chief government whip a request for a deferral of this vote. As such, the vote will take place tomorrow at the normal time of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Campbell, Sarah
Chudleigh, Ted

Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pattapiece, Randy
Prue, Michael
Schein, Jonah
Scott, Laurie

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 24, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. It's great to be here to speak to Bill 50, which is An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. We've spent a lot of time over the last four or five days speaking of a Liberal debacle, which was the cancellation of the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga. After being able to read the documents that we did receive from the Ministry of Energy, we have learned that the total cost is only rising on that debacle and that decision to move the gas plants. It's now at \$650 million and rising.

That's on the gas plant debate. We're now back to talking about Bill 50, which was created as a result of another Liberal boondoggle, and that was the Ornge air ambulance disaster, which has resulted in countless hundreds of millions of dollars wasted.

Not just dollars wasted, though, on our Ornge air ambulance service; we're talking about a real lack of oversight from the Ministry of Health when it comes to the safety of the Ornge air helicopters, and that's another thing that should be kept in mind. While the gas plant debacle wasted tax dollars on moving gas plants for political reasons, the Ornge air ambulance debacle had nothing to do with saving Liberal seats. The Ornge air debacle had everything to do with a lack of accountability and a lack of oversight by the Ministry of Health when it came to this file.

The interesting thing about this is that it did put human life in safety. There are a number of different coroners' inquests that could be coming from the Ornge ambulance disaster as well. There have also been countless hundreds of millions of dollars that have been wasted as a result of this. The government blindly defends an organization that was siphoning scarce health care dollars into a web of for-profit companies.

This happened. We know this happened. We saw a \$1.4-million salary go to the former leader at Ornge and its web—I know you'll recall our member from Westmarket-Aurora standing up on several different occasions and showing the schematic; it looked like a tangled cobweb of workings between profit and not-for-profit

agencies within Ornge. It was incredibly difficult to understand where the money was going and who was responsible for what when it came to the Ornge way of doing business. Clearly there were many, many Liberal insiders who were involved in that organization as well. We heard from many of them at committee.

The other thing to keep in mind when it comes to the public affairs committee and the work that they were doing in looking into Ornge: The Minister of Health on several different occasions, maybe in the neighbourhood of 16 or 20 different occasions in the House, stood up and she said, "If it's the will of the Legislature to form a select committee on Ornge, then I will abide by that." And we actually had a vote in this Legislature not dissimilar to the one which we had just a few minutes ago, and the will of the Legislature was quite clear that we wanted and needed a select committee into Ornge to try and get to the bottom of who was actually pulling the strings there. How much money was wasted? How dangerous was this for people requiring that service in the province of Ontario?

The government has continued to stall. They won't respect the will of the Legislature when the official opposition and the third party teamed up to vote for that select committee on Ornge; we're still waiting for that select committee on Ornge. So once again, the government hasn't followed through on its promises, but that's no surprise when it comes to the government on the opposite side of this hall.

It's very simple that Bill 50 is proof of this deep cynicism and proof of a failed leadership at the Ministry of Health.

Let's take a quick look at Bill 50: The bill's single biggest weakness is a so-called whistle-blower protection section, and we have had a number of whistle-blowers who have blown the whistle and talked about the improprieties that were going on at Ornge. Bill 50 fails to protect some of those very people who are in the best position to report fraud, waste and abuse, and also health and safety violations, which did occur in these helicopters. And you'll recall that people requiring cardiac treatments were unable to have CPR because the gurneys that were inside of these vehicles were placed too high and the health care workers and the paramedics who were on board these helicopters couldn't provide that life-saving service. So it fails by not providing across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers.

Secondly, it fails by imposing limits on the individuals who are protected and whom they can approach with information. So why should we believe, after the first fiasco, that anything has actually changed at Ornge, or will change, as a result of Bill 50?

What's needed is a process that will not only safeguard the whistle-blower but will also instil confidence that their concerns will be taken seriously. The Ombudsman should be engaged to assist in developing that process and should be integral to a formalized whistle-blower reporting process, if this is to have any meaningful effect in cleaning up the problems at Ornge.

There were a number of red flags raised by Ornge whistle-blowers, as I mentioned; they warned the Ministry of Health about Ornge deceit. Over four years ago, in 2008, they told the province that the publicly funded organization, Ornge, was handing out money at will. The whistle-blower put his issues in writing to provincial officials and was interviewed by investigators in November of that year—2008—almost four full years ago. And the health ministry told him the next month that everything was fine; all of the problems had been solved.

Ornge's Dr. Chris Mazza paid \$144 million to the Italian helicopter company for 12 helicopters—the AgustaWestland model. Even though these helicopters were flagged for safety concerns and the deal personally enriched Dr. Mazza to the tune of about \$6.7 million—that's on top of the \$1.4 million he was paid in salary. We also heard about the loan that was given to him. The story had been well documented over the summer months, but perhaps a lot of people weren't paying attention over the summer months when the public accounts committee was looking into all of the problems that existed at Ornge—also, I should point out, a public accounts committee that is yet to hear from the Premier, who has failed to answer questions on Ornge and failed to answer specific questions about his connections with Dr. Mazza and other Liberal insiders who were involved in that organization.

1730

Seven hundred million of taxpayers' money has been spent on Ornge since 2005 and there is a yet-to-be-determined number on the millions of dollars that may have been used for personal gain at our air ambulance service, at Ornge. Shady real estate deals have come to light as well.

It didn't really come to light until a story in the media. Mr. Klees, our member from Newmarket–Aurora, of course, has been the lead on this for the PC Party and he's done a fabulous job in trying to hold the government to account, but they're not answering questions and instead put Bill 50 out there as the be-all and end-all to curing the problems at Ornge. Mr. Klees and the public accounts committee are trying to get the answers to what is wrong at the Ornge air ambulance service. I'm afraid, in the short amount of time that I have left, Bill 50 is not the answer. We're debating legislation that's nothing less than a defence by the minister to cover the fact that she failed in her oversight responsibilities. We see through it and we know the public will see through it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about Bill 50 for a few minutes. I think, given some of the comments that the member made, that it is important to sort out that there have been extensive hearings at the public accounts committee on the subject of Ornge. We've sat for days and days and days. We've heard from dozens and dozens of witnesses. That investigation into what happened at Ornge is certainly ongoing.

We're at the stage now where the legislative researcher is beginning to try and capture what we've learned, but it's a lot of information that the committee has received and now has to try and make some sense out of. I think that's important to understand.

I think it's also important to understand that Bill 50 is just part of the minister's response. It's the part of the minister's response that needs to be in legislation, but one of the things that the minister did was immediate. She got rid of the old board of directors, she put new senior management in place, and the first thing that the new board, the new senior management, did was deal with the issue of the interior configuration of the helicopters. Those helicopter interiors have been reconfigured with the approval of Transport Canada in a way which allows CPR to be now done properly for patients. I just want the people of Ontario to understand that, because of the actions of the minister, those helicopters are now safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to comment on my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings. He always stands in this House and brings passion and conviction to what he's talking about. He does his homework; he does his facts.

This is one of those ones again: It's too little, too late. "We will do better," is what we continue hearing, particularly on this health file. "We will do better." Unfortunately, in health emergencies, you don't always get a redo; you don't always get a second chance. This is just a fine example, very similar to what we've been debating in this House for the last four days. There's been a lack of oversight. Things are going wrong on the other side, and the only reason, I believe, they brought this one again, an act to amend, is because the media caught on. The media figured out that there were things going on behind the scenes that needed to be delved into. We, as the opposition, had also brought that to the floor, and now we're actually doing it.

This bill is about oversight. It's about making sure that there's more there. We should have had this in the first place. If they'd take time to do things right the first time, we wouldn't be wasting numerous resources, money, finances. You know, \$750 million, as my colleague has appropriately pointed out, limits the health care that people get. That limits the schools and the educational opportunities. They just want to sweep everything under the rug: "Oh, I'm sorry. We made a mistake." In fact, they don't even often say "sorry" in the situation of the gas plants. It just looks very, very similar to what we've been talking about for the last four days.

We've asked for a select committee. The minister, in this House, said, "If it's the will of the people of this House," and what did she do? We're still waiting for that one.

But the most glaring deficiency of this bill is the actual whistle-blower protection. People on the front line have stepped up. They've given up a career because they saw

wrongdoing and they were prepared to step up. The minister hasn't done that. The Premier hasn't done that, or the minister would have actually either resigned or been forced to resign over this Ornge fiasco boondoggle. Now we're into the gas plant. It's just a trend that we see too often, Mr. Speaker. We're going to hold their feet to the fire every step of the way and get the truth for Ontarians, as they so deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The point I would make to what was said is that you would hope at one point the government would start to learn something from what's happened. We understand that these decisions were made. You can stand in the House or stand outside the House and speculate as to why the government did it. That's a whole other thing. But I think what the public expects is that at one point a government says, "Okay, I get it. I understand that what happened is not acceptable to the public and I'm going to change the way I do things."

I guess that's what I'm having the largest amount of trouble with in listening to all of this. I hear what the government says in their speeches today. I was at the Liberal convention in Ottawa on the weekend, where I got to hear the Premier speak and got to listen to his scrums after, and I really get the sense that the argument that the government puts forward is, "If only we can keep on explaining that what we're doing is good for people, then they're going to vote for us."

At one point, you have to say to yourself, "Well, hang on. Maybe it's a question that what you're doing, people don't like," and that you need to do something to change your way so that in fact you do what the people have sent us here to do, and that is to do the right thing. Is doing a \$650-million seat-saver program the right thing? I think the answer is no. I know the answer is no, and I think what the public would want to see is the government to say, "We've made an error and we accept it. I'm sorry, and we're not going to do it again," and move on.

But what I hear is essentially the government saying, "We're just going to keep on saying—if we can only explain what we did and why we did it, how lucky we all are as Ontarians, people will buy it." I just think at the end of the day it tells me that the government needs to go back and do a little bit of thinking. People expect from their politicians—they know we're not perfect. They know that all sides of the House make mistakes, that all governments don't get it right all the time, but when you do it wrong, you should admit you're wrong and move on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Bill 50 was the subject of discussions when Carol McKeogh, the deputy director, legal services branch, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, gave her evidence at the committee. Bill 50 was well discussed there, and the evidence included a statement that she had not been involved in the original Ornge agreement. She first got involved in providing legal ser-

vices for the ministry in connection with Ornge—she's very experienced. She's the most experienced person there, but she was chosen partly because of experience and partly because of time. She said that she prepared the amended performance agreement between the ministry and Ornge, and the amended agreement was signed by both parties on March 19, 2012. She said that the next part, of course, was to have Bill 50, and she prepared Bill 50 herself. She was involved in the development of Bill 50, this bill. The proposed legislation, in her words, would provide the province many of the same provisions for intervention in the public interest which currently exist for public hospitals and the Public Hospitals Act. She concludes that the amended performance agreement and the proposed legislative changes were introduced in response to the issues at Ornge identified by the Auditor General. The Auditor General was at that meeting as part of the public accounts meeting.

Three important changes were then identified by Ms. McKeogh. She gave this evidence under oath, that this was a very important agreement, that it should be brought in.

We always get—we got it right from the beginning, but never with any evidence—that there wasn't whistleblower protection. Well, section 7.7 of Bill 50 is the whistle-blowing protection. That's the same whistle-blowing protection that's in there for hospitals, etc., and it's quite detailed. It's in the bill. This is a bill that's required now to go with that new performance agreement, the new changes that were made by the minister at Ornge.

So Bill 50 is needed. We should support it and we should get it through to get it approved.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for questions and comments, and so I return to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings for his reply.

Mr. Todd Smith: I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the members from Guelph and from Ottawa-Orléans for their comments; my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound as well, who's the deputy critic on the health file for the official opposition; and the member from Timmins-James Bay as well.

I especially appreciate the remarks from the member from Timmins-James Bay from the third party as he said that when you make a mistake—and obviously there's been a mistake by this government; there have been many, many mistakes by this government over the last nine years, but they fail to even recognize when they make a mistake.

Our member from Chatham-Kent-Essex always says, "When you mess up, you fess up." I have that ingrained in my left ear, because he yells it often at the Minister of Health when it comes to this particular situation with Ornge. But the government just fails to have any humility when it comes to making mistakes.

Obviously, there has been a huge mistake made when it comes to the Ornge file. Somebody missed the boat—

big time. That's been very, very clear. We're just still trying to determine exactly how much financial collateral and how much human collateral has been expended because of the lack of oversight at Ornge. That's what this Bill 50 is for. It was put out there to try to take the attack off from our member from Newmarket–Aurora, but obviously it falls very short in trying to do that.

It just seems like we're jumping from scandal to scandal with this government: the gas plant scandal, the eHealth scandal, the Ornge scandal, the feed-in tariff scandal—where does it all end? It's time for the government to show some humility and apologize to taxpayers in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: This is one of those bills that comes along, I think, too frequently—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You've already spoken to this bill—it comes along frequently all right. I'm sorry; I've been advised that you've already spoken to second reading of this bill; therefore, I can't allow you to speak again.

Further debate? The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Kitchener–Conestoga: Has he spoken to this bill?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Nice try.

Further debate: The member for Halton?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): He's already spoken as well. We do keep records.

One last time: Further debate? The member—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Sarnia–Lambton has already spoken to second reading of this bill as well.

Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell as well.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice from the chief government whip, and as such, this vote will be deferred until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day. I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Milloy has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1745.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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First Session, 40th Parliament

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Tuesday 2 October 2012

Mardi 2 octobre 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 October 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 octobre 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NON-PROFIT HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2012 LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES COOPÉRATIVES DE LOGEMENT SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Ms. Wynne moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés coopératives et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne les coopératives de logement sans but lucratif et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Wynne, you now have the floor for debate.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very pleased to be here to speak to second reading of Bill 65. Just before I begin, I'd like to do two things. First of all, I'd like to introduce, from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, some guests who are with us today: Dale Reagan, managing director; Harvey Cooper, manager of government relations; Diane Miles, manager of co-operative services; and Simone Swail, project manager, government relations. Thank you very much for being with us this morning. And my policy adviser, Nick Wall, is joining us as well.

The second thing I'd like to do is just note that I'll be sharing my time with my very capable parliamentary assistant, the member for York West, and he will be speaking in this hour.

As I said, I'm very pleased to speak on second reading of Bill 65, an amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and the Co-operative Corporations Act. First, I want to make clear why we need this legislation. Under the Co-operative Corporations Act, co-ops have a sometimes complex, sometimes costly and often time-

consuming eviction process. This eviction process is called the co-op tenure dispute resolution process.

Ce projet de loi, s'il était adopté, rendrait le processus de règlement des différends en matière d'occupation impliquant des coopératives de logement plus efficace, accessible et transparent.

Our proposed legislation would, if it's passed, allow for greater efficiency, accessibility and transparency to the co-op tenure dispute resolution process. I've heard from many of the representatives of the co-op housing sector, including the folks who are here today, and they all tell me the same thing. They say that the current process for terminating occupancy agreements for co-ops is too complicated. They say it is inefficient for these non-profit housing providers and their members. This is an issue that's been important to our government for some time.

The underlying reason why this is important is that we want to make sure that co-op housing in this province can function as efficiently as possible. We believe in the co-op model; we think that it is a very strong model of housing. Certainly in my own riding, and I know in ridings across the province, we have fine examples of co-ops where there's a very collegial and fine working relationship among the residents because of the model, but this eviction process, this dispute resolution process, is not in place.

As you may remember, my colleague Donna Cansfield, the MPP for Etobicoke Centre, introduced a private member's bill designed to help improve the co-op housing dispute resolution system in spring 2011. Regrettably, there wasn't enough time for Bill 198 to proceed to a final vote. The Ontario region of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada has advocated to move co-op housing tenure disputes from the Ontario court system to the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Now, I want to just talk for a moment about who and what the Ontario region of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada is. They're the main advocate in this province for not-for-profit co-op housing members and boards. Our government recognizes and appreciates the dedicated work of the Co-operative Housing Federation.

Nous partageons l'engagement de la fédération en matière de maintien et de promotion d'un secteur du logement coopératif fort.

We share the federation's commitment, as I've said, Madam Speaker, to maintaining and promoting a strong co-operative housing sector, so our proposed legislation

supports the co-op housing sector by making some of these long-needed changes.

So what are we proposing to change? Currently, the tenure dispute resolution process for co-op housing is governed by the Co-operative Corporations Act. Under this act, co-ops must go through a lengthy and oftentimes costly process in the courts to evict a resident. I can't stress enough that it is an onerous process, and that's why we are undertaking this change. We're proposing to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and the Co-operative Corporations Act to move most co-op tenure disputes from the courts to the Landlord and Tenant Board.

We have to ask: How is this a desirable improvement on the existing system? What is this going to make better? First of all, let's talk about what the Landlord and Tenant Board is, because I think that will make it clearer why this is a good thing to do. The Landlord and Tenant Board is the body established under the Residential Tenancies Act to resolve rental housing disputes. Under our proposed legislation, co-ops would also be able to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to resolve tenure disputes. However, this could happen only when the dispute concerns grounds already provided for under the Residential Tenancies Act, or the RTA.

I want to emphasize that the Landlord and Tenant Board is an independent agency. It provides Ontarians with timely access to specialized, expert and effective dispute resolution. So the Landlord and Tenant Board has a lot of experience in this area and understands many of the issues that surround these residency disputes.

The Landlord and Tenant Board has offices across the province, so it is very accessible, and it gives landlords and tenants convenient access for resolving matters that profoundly affect their everyday lives.

Madame la Présidente, le transfert des expulsions des tribunaux à la Commission de la location immobilière rendra le processus de règlement des différends en matière d'occupation plus efficace, rentable et transparent, tant pour les conseils d'administration des coopératives que pour leurs membres.

Madam Speaker, moving eviction cases from the courts to the Landlord and Tenant Board would make the resolution of tenure disputes more efficient, cost-effective and transparent for co-op boards and their members. It would remove some of that onerous burden that exists in the current system.

The Co-operative Corporations Act provides a framework for housing co-ops to create their bylaws. A bylaw is created when it is passed by the co-op's board of directors and is confirmed by the members of that co-op at a general members' meeting. While there are many common bylaws shared among housing co-ops, there are also some that have passed their own unique bylaws.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, the proposed legislation would also amend the Co-operative Corporations Act. It would do this in two important ways. First, the Co-operative Corporations Act would be amended to clarify that when a co-op tenure dispute proceeds through

the courts, it would be judged on the facts of the case rather than an assessment of whether proper procedures had been followed by the co-op. The second key amendment to the Co-operative Corporations Act would see the streamlining of the internal decision-making process of the co-ops. It would do this by clarifying that decisions made by a co-op's board could be appealed to the co-op membership only if the co-op's bylaws expressly permit appeals.

0910

Ces modifications favoriseraient la transparence de toutes les décisions.

These amendments would promote the transparency of all the decisions. They'd be less costly for co-op boards and co-op members, not to mention less time-consuming for all concerned. We have to remember that in these situations, the people involved want to get these issues resolved as quickly as possible. That is because it affects their lives and it's an unhappy time, often, so you want to be able to move through the process quickly.

J'aimerais aussi souligner que les modifications proposées, si elles sont adoptées, offriraient l'avantage supplémentaire d'accorder aux coopératives de logement et à leurs membres un accès à des services de médiation pour régler leurs litiges.

I'd also like to note that our proposed amendments, if passed, would have the added benefit of giving co-ops and their members access to mediation services to help them work out their differences. This could provide relief to the court system. I think all of us in this House could agree that if a mediated solution is possible, that is desirable, because what that means is that there's been a process whereby some common ground has been achieved, and that can make for a much more satisfactory conclusion. Our proposed legislation would offer co-op members involved in tenure disputes a process that's independent, transparent and affordable.

Notre projet de loi est le fruit de consultations exhaustives avec le secteur du logement coopératif au cours des trois dernières années.

For three years, we have been in consultation with the co-op housing sector. We've heard from them about their concerns, and our proposed legislation is a result of that process.

Madam Speaker, I hope that all members recognize the benefits of this proposed legislation and I hope that we will have support on all sides of the House. I know that these concerns have been expressed to all sides of the House, and I hope that in the spirit of partnership and our mutual goal to improve co-op housing in the province, there will be support for this bill. We only have to look at a few examples of the successful housing co-ops around the province to see the difference they make to our communities. I noted at the beginning of my remarks that I think we have co-ops everywhere.

For example, the Eastern Ontario Christian Senior Citizens Co-op in Ottawa: This co-op recently completed an extension made possible by support from the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program. The funding

helped to build 69 units for Ontario's most vulnerable people, including low-income seniors and persons with disabilities.

The construction of these units also served to stimulate the local economy by creating jobs, of course, and contributed to the strength of the community. From the library services to the in-house nurse to the event rooms for birthday celebrations, this co-op is a shining example of what a successful co-op can provide. I think that is a very important part of this discussion that we should note, that when we talk about housing, often we talk about bricks and mortar; often we talk about four walls and a roof; we talk about the shelter component. But if we think about the programs that are involved in the successful co-op or other successful models, those are supports and opportunities and space within a housing development that provide a community. They provide a place for people to come together and become a community. So those supports are very important to a successful housing development.

Il ne s'agit pas seulement d'un foyer; c'est une collectivité. C'est un endroit où les résidents se sentent en sécurité et qui leur permet de mener une vie productive.

It's not just a home; it's a community. It's a place where residents feel safe and secure and lead productive lives.

Another successful co-op is the Huron Pines cooperative in London. This project in northeast London opened in 2009 and provides comfortable, energy-efficient townhomes and apartments. The project was developed by a group of dedicated and committed Londoners eager to create a community designed for and targeted to singles, couples and small families. As with so many co-ops, the push for the co-op came from the community. It was made possible with assistance from three levels of government and support from Gethsemane United Church and the London Affordable Housing Foundation—again, a partnership of community members and organizations. Our government's affordable housing program helped to support the construction of 26 of these units, so government has a role to play.

Rappelons que cette coopérative de logement n'est pas qu'un simple abri.

Again, this co-op is much more than a building or just a shelter; it provides a stable and safe place for vulnerable Ontarians to build a good life for themselves and their families.

In another example, McLean Co-Operative Homes in Ottawa received funding from our affordable housing program for 63 affordable housing units. This co-op provides a home for seniors, recent immigrants and persons with disabilities. The units are designed for both families and single individuals.

The list of amazing co-op examples around the province goes on and on. As I said, I'm sure that every single member in this House today could come up with an example of a remarkable co-op in their own riding. But it's the residents of the co-ops, obviously, Madam Speaker, that make these terrific places. Co-op residents

don't just live in the co-op; they help to build the co-op community, and they take part in the life of that community.

Co-op housing provides safe, secure, affordable housing to many families. The sector provides a viable option for families and individuals with a diverse range of backgrounds and incomes. And that is a big conversation—it's a big, important conversation—within the housing sector; that is the mixed-income communities that I think are the healthiest kinds of communities. If we look at the redevelopments that are happening around the province, it's a focus on mixed income, people from different backgrounds, people with different vulnerabilities living together and creating that strong community.

J'accorde une grande importance au logement coopératif et aux personnes qui vivent dans ces collectivités et qui travaillent pour fournir ces habitations.

Co-operative housing and the people who live in those communities and work to provide those homes are very important to me and to our government, not just because I'm the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, but because I know that having a safe and decent place to live is vital to good health, personal success, raising children, caring for parents and having a well-balanced life. Decent housing is much more than a shelter: It provides stability, it provides security and dignity, it plays a central role in reducing poverty, and it creates a strong base from which to find a job and contribute to strengthening the Ontario economy. The sector is a key partner in supporting the availability of affordable and safe housing for families throughout Ontario.

These are the people for whom our government is taking strong action today. Our proposed legislation would help support co-op providers and the families and children who call co-ops their home.

I want to just talk for a moment about some of the things that we have done because, having said that we believe strongly in the importance of affordable and accessible housing, I want to talk about the progress that we've made on the housing agenda since we came to office in 2003.

Nous faisons une véritable différence dans le quotidien des familles qui travaillent et pour améliorer la situation des foyers les plus vulnérables de l'Ontario.

I believe, Madam Speaker, that we're making a real difference in the lives of working families and in the circumstances of Ontario's most vulnerable households.

Our government recognizes the role housing plays in supporting the growth and health of communities across Ontario, and that's in fact why we developed the long-term affordable housing strategy. It's the first of its kind in Ontario, and it demonstrates our commitment to having a plan, to working with municipalities, to working with housing providers and to working with communities to make sure that the needs of people across the province are met.

Now, Madam Speaker, I can predict—not that I have a crystal ball, but I am pretty sure—that at least speakers from one of the parties on the opposite side of the House

will say that we have not done enough. I will be the first to say that there is more that needs to be done, but we have made a huge advance, and having the long-term affordable housing strategy in place is part of that progress.

Our strategy supports our poverty reduction strategy, and it sets a strong foundation for a more efficient, accessible system for those who need safe, affordable housing. That's why we as a government plan to continue to support the co-op housing sector. It's why we believe that it's important that we keep the housing sector strong and keep the co-op housing sector strong: so that it can provide viable housing choices for Ontario families.

Madame la Présidente, un secteur du logement ontarien qui mise sur la diversité n'est pas complet sans un secteur du logement coopératif sain.

I believe that a housing sector that offers diversity for Ontario is not complete without a healthy co-op sector, and that's why I urge all members to support this bill. This legislation is another step we're taking to support affordable housing across Ontario, and as I have said, there's much more to be done.

0920

Social housing in Ontario is a public asset, valued in excess of \$50 billion, that will continue to deteriorate if the federal government does not become a full funding partner with the province and its municipalities. I think we have demonstrated since we came to office in 2003 that we are willing to work in partnership with the federal government. We have been able to do that; we're willing to work with all orders of government in order to continue to provide affordable housing. So I strongly urge all members of the Legislature to call on the federal government to become a full partner with us and our municipalities by providing sustained funding for affordable and social housing.

Madam Speaker, that is an issue I have raised at the national table with other ministers, who are working in the local government area. I'm hoping that I'll be able to have an opportunity to meet with Ministers of Housing from across the country—because, if the current funding commitment persists, by 2033, the federal investment in housing in Ontario will be down to zero. So you can see a clear trajectory downwards from here out over the next 20 years. We really need that commitment from the federal government in order to be able to continue to build affordable housing.

I talked about affordable housing—safe, secure housing—being fundamental in the quest to reduce poverty. One of the things I didn't speak to, but I think it's important, is that not only does it provide safety and security for adults and for children, but it also provides opportunities for kids to do better at school and the opportunity for adults to be in a safe, secure environment so that they can go out and find work. If you're worrying about where you're going to live, if you're worrying about the state of your home, it's very hard to have the wherewithal to go out and look for a job. All of that is contingent on having safe, secure, affordable housing.

I know that having a place to call home is the first step out of poverty. We've talked about that.

Pour les familles ontariennes, disposer d'un logement est une première étape qui permet de relever bien des défis auxquels elles font face.

Having a home is the first step in addressing many of the challenges that face Ontario families; having a home is the first step to accessing greater opportunities in life. It's a foundation from which people can build their lives so as to move from negative situations to better lives that contribute to a better tomorrow for us all.

We know that helping people to have safe, affordable and healthy homes is a complex issue. There is no simple, quick fix; we are aware of that. We need a range of opportunities. Today's proposed legislation is one more step our government is taking to support the co-op housing sector so that the co-op housing sector can be part of that continuum of opportunity.

Ce gouvernement a l'intention d'assurer la solidité du secteur des coopératives de logement pour qu'il continue d'offrir un choix viable aux familles ontariennes.

Our government plans to help the co-op housing sector to remain strong so that it continues to provide a viable choice for Ontario families. That's why we're taking this action today; that's why we're proposing this legislation. I urge all members to support this bill, and I want to thank the folks from the co-op federation for their advocacy and for their work in this sector.

Merci beaucoup.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair.

I am pleased to be here in support of second reading of Bill 65, an amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and the Co-operative Corporations Act. This important amendment would improve the way non-profit co-operative housing boards and their members resolve disputes in Ontario. This proposed legislation would, if passed, bring greater efficiency, accessibility and transparency to the co-op tenure dispute resolution process.

There is no question that the current process for terminating occupancy agreements for co-ops is complex, costly and time-consuming for these non-profit housing providers and their members. This legislation is the result of significant consultation with the co-op housing sector over the past few years. The Co-operative Housing Federation has been a long-time advocate of legislation that would help decisions related to tenure disputes be fair to both co-ops and their members.

As you have heard, Speaker, the Co-operative Housing Federation represents housing co-ops throughout Ontario. I want to repeat the minister's message that we share the Co-operative Housing Federation's commitment to maintaining a strong co-operative housing sector in the province of Ontario.

The Ontario Region of the Co-operative Housing Federation is the voice of co-op housing in this province.

They concentrate on issues that have a provincial focus and affect only Ontario members.

As the minister stated as well, the proposed legislation would amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and the Co-operative Corporations Act to move most co-op tenure disputes from the courts to the Landlord and Tenant Board. This board is the body established under the Residential Tenancies Act to resolve rental housing disputes.

If passed, this legislation would mean that co-op providers and members would have most of the same protections, most of the same benefits and the same responsibilities afforded to landlords and tenants facing tenure disputes under the RTA. For example, co-ops will be able to seek resolution to disputes through the Landlord and Tenant Board for things such as arrears; persistent late payment of rent or housing charges; illegal behaviour; interfering with reasonable enjoyment; and wilful damage.

Tenure disputes based on grounds outside the RTA, however, would continue to be handled through the internal democratic co-op eviction process and the courts. For example, tenure disputes based on the following types of bylaws would continue to be resolved by the courts: violation of no-pets provisions; failure to fulfil co-op members' duties, such as shovelling snow or cutting the lawn; and any other ground not provided for under the RTA. This process needs to be retained because co-ops are governed democratically. Co-op members vote to establish bylaws that set out grounds for tenure disputes that are not provided for under the RTA.

The proposed legislation would also amend the Co-operative Corporations Act to streamline and to improve the current internal eviction processes of non-profit co-op housing. As the minister said, the Co-operative Corporations Act would be amended in two ways. First, the Co-operative Corporations Act would be amended to clarify that when a co-op tenure dispute proceeds through the courts, it would be judged on the facts of the case. The second key amendment to the co-operative housing act would see the streamlining of the internal decision-making process of co-ops.

As the minister noted, there are many benefits to this proposed legislation. The new approach would make the co-op eviction process more responsive and cost-effective. Streamlining the dispute resolution process mandated by the Co-operative Corporations Act would simplify the internal process and shorten the time required for resolution of these disputes.

Our proposed legislation, if passed, would utilize the expertise of the Landlord and Tenant Board and, in most cases, allow access to established infrastructure and procedures designed to deal with tenure disputes. It would be less costly for Ontario co-ops to use the Landlord and Tenant Board in most tenure disputes, in comparison to using the current court-based system for all tenure disputes. Having cases go before the Landlord and Tenant Board could also reduce the burden on the court system.

Current co-op law and policy regarding housing charges and other requirements of membership would remain the same, and the unique system of co-op housing would be recognized. Although co-op members would not have the right to make applications to the Landlord and Tenant Board, the rights of co-op members to use internal co-op processes and to apply to the courts regarding co-op issues would be maintained. Members would be provided with the opportunity to be heard by the Landlord and Tenant Board through a process that is transparent, accessible and routine. The Landlord and Tenant Board could provide for mediation and, as much as possible, try and resolve a tenure dispute prior to it proceeding to a hearing.

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The financially difficult times we are facing call for us to do things differently. The single most important step the government can take to strengthen the economy is to balance the budget. We are making the right choices to ensure that Ontario families are receiving the best possible services at the best value for tax dollars. All of us have a role to play in balancing the budget. Building a stronger Ontario requires strong action. We will make the right choices to protect the vital gains we have made together. The reality is that we must do more with less; the need is greater than the resources available. But if we work collaboratively and if we can be flexible, we can stretch those limited funds to produce greater results.

As we know, Speaker, our government introduced a new budget for the province that makes some tough decisions. We aim to balance the budget and eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. To reach our target, our government proposes to reduce the growth of program spending and contain costs by \$17.7 billion over the next three years. The choices were difficult. We are in different times, with a vulnerable global economy. We all face difficult realities. Expenditures have to equal revenues, and revenue sources have to be sustainable, which is why we must work together to be innovative in our approaches and to find ways to stretch the funds we have.

Co-ops have a history of stretching funds. They make efficient use of their members' resources. Speaker, I have been talking about co-op housing, but co-operatives take many forms and operate in all sectors of our society. Last year, the Premier wrote in a letter to the Ontario Co-operative Association that "Co-operatives boast a proud history of enriching our communities, strengthening our society and building our nation."

Their importance is recognized by the United Nations, which has declared 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives. The 2012 slogan for the campaign is "Co-operative Enterprises Build a Better World." The campaign is intended to raise public awareness of the invaluable contributions that co-operative enterprises have made towards poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration. The campaign highlights the co-operative business model as a strong and potent alternative means of doing business and furthering social economic development.

In the spirit of the International Year of Cooperatives, I would like to acknowledge the wide range of co-operatives that exist in Ontario. From the local credit union to housing co-operatives and agricultural co-ops, they all play a critical role in supporting strong communities.

Co-ops are a way for a community to have control over the economic, social and cultural activities that affect the daily lives of community members. Co-ops take on many different forms. They can be: agricultural, housing, credit and other financial services delivered through credit unions, groceries, education, telecommunication, insurance, utilities and many more. This just reaffirms the importance that co-ops play in our society. Co-operatives play a unique role in improving our communities, building communities and strengthening our economy.

The community-based management style is at the foundation of all co-ops. When people manage their own resources, they take pride in their ownership. They unite to help the community that they have created. The values of honesty, openness and concern for the wider community are the engine that fuels the co-op movement.

There are about 1,300 co-ops in Ontario. These are a strong part of the economy of many communities throughout our province. In fact, an International Labour Organization report provides compelling evidence that co-ops are more resilient than other business models in times of economic crisis.

The report entitled *Resilience of the Co-operative Business Model in Time of Crisis* notes that the global financial situation and ensuing economic crisis have had a negative impact on the majority of enterprises. However, it also highlights that co-operatives from all over the world are demonstrating strong resilience to this crisis. It notes that financial co-operatives remain financially strong, consumer co-operatives see less turnover and worker co-operatives are seeing growth as people choose the co-op model to deal with our new economic reality.

The report reviews historical evidence, as well as empirical evidence, to demonstrate not only that the co-operative model of business survives crisis but also why co-operatives are sustainable. They help maintain the livelihood of the community. It is remarkable when you think that more than 1.4 million Ontarians are members of at least one co-operative.

There are several key principles that guide all co-ops. These can be found in the Statement on the Co-operative Identity that was adopted at the 1995 General Assembly of the International Co-operative Alliance held in Manchester on the occasion of the alliance's centenary. The statement was the product of a long process of consultation with thousands of co-ops around the world. They define a co-operative as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise."

"Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

"The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice."

The Statement on the Co-operative Identity notes a number of these principles:

(1) Co-operatives are open and voluntary organizations. They are open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership. There is no discrimination on the grounds of gender, social status, race, political affiliation or religion.

(2) Co-operatives are democratic organizations. They are run by their own members. These members actively participate in making decisions. Individuals serving as elected representatives are accountable to their membership. Co-op members have equal voting rights—that is, one member, one vote—and co-operatives and other levels are organized in a democratic manner as well.

(3) Co-op members contribute to and democratically control the capital of their co-operative.

(4) Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

(5) Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees. This is to help them so that they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operative. They reach out to the general public to inform others of the benefits of co-operatives.

(6) Co-ops believe in co-operation among co-operatives. Co-operatives work together through local, national, regional and international structures. This helps strengthen the co-operative movement.

(7) Co-operatives have a concern for community. Co-ops focus on their members' needs and also work for the sustainable development of their communities.

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Speaker, co-op housing in particular contributes to the greater good of society in so many meaningful ways in communities all across the province. It creates employment. It promotes social inclusion and social responsibility. It develops leadership and develops a sense of community. It develops a commitment to partnership. And co-op housing increases a community's sustainable economic capacity. The fact is that co-op housing helps us build communities we can be proud of. The members who live in co-ops are the ones responsible for running their co-op.

Co-ops have played a vital role in our affordable housing system for over 40 years. In Ontario, there are about 550 non-profit housing co-ops. These co-ops provide affordable housing for some 44,000 households,

which represent about 125,000 Ontarians, including some of our most vulnerable citizens. Co-ops can take the form of medium-sized apartment buildings or townhouses.

People who live in co-op housing come from every walk of life. Co-op housing provides a home for people of many different backgrounds, people of many different income levels and people with many different needs. It provides homes for medium- to low-income families, new immigrants, seniors, people with disabilities and members of the aboriginal community. The diversity and community focus of co-op housing is what makes it unique and strengthens this province.

Our government plans to help the co-op housing sector remain strong. We want to see it continue to provide a viable choice for Ontario families. A housing sector that offers diversity for Ontario is not complete without a healthy co-op sector. Our government recognizes the need for affordable housing in its role in supporting the growth and health of communities across our province of Ontario. That is why it is important to recognize the role the Co-operative Housing Federation plays in the housing system in our province.

Many of the same values are at the foundation of co-op housing as well. At the 2009 Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada annual meeting, the delegates adopted a set of common values for Canadian housing co-ops. These values highlight the fact that Canada's non-profit housing co-operatives are dedicated to developing strong housing communities that operate under the control of the resident members for their mutual benefit on a not-for-profit basis. As a movement, they are united by a strong commitment to uphold and promote these agreed-upon values. They include:

(1) The international co-op principles will guide the way they govern and run their housing co-ops.

(2) They will continue to operate their co-ops on a not-for-profit basis as it is fundamental to the future and their commitment to those in need of housing in Canada.

(3) Co-ops strive to house members with a mix of incomes.

(4) Housing co-ops will treat their employees and other providers of management services fairly and value the contribution they make to their communities.

(5) Co-ops are inclusive communities. They promote diversity by encouraging a membership of differing backgrounds and abilities.

(6) A commitment to environmental sustainability will guide the operation of housing co-ops.

(7) Co-ops will strive to provide a high-quality living environment for their members and do their best to respond to their changing needs over time.

(8) The right of members to live in their co-ops is protected as long as they respect the bylaw rules and policies that they have together agreed will govern their housing.

Madam Speaker, just as with other co-ops, co-op housing is member-governed. The people who live in co-ops are the members of the co-op, not tenants. Many of those who help run co-operatives are volunteers. The people they serve are their neighbours and their friends.

They are responsible for the decisions that affect these people's everyday lives. The role of volunteers in today's modern society cannot be underestimated. They play a huge part in the running of our communities. These volunteers come from all walks of life and are of all ages, and they help run co-ops. They build a better community for us all.

The members who live in co-ops are the ones responsible for running the co-op. Each member has a vote, and every year, members elect a board of directors from the membership. Members make the big decisions about how the building will be maintained and how the business of the co-op will be managed. Most co-ops hire staff to do the day-to-day work. Members work together to keep their housing well-managed and affordable.

Co-op housing plays a very special role in communities all across our province. Co-op housing has a long history in Canada. It goes back as far as the 1930s, when, among other co-operative initiatives, the Nova Scotia Antigonish Movement promoted co-ops that built homes for their members. When the construction of these homes was finished, the homes were sold to the members and the housing co-operatives were dissolved. There were building co-operatives similar to this formed in Quebec between the 1920s and 1940s. The earliest student co-op in Canada was the Guelph Campus Co-op, which started up in 1913 as a retail co-operative and later went on to develop student housing and other services.

Organized lobbying began in the 1960s to gain government support for co-op housing, and 1968 marked the birth of the Co-operative Housing Foundation of Canada and the beginning of their advocacy for co-op housing. The work of this group paid off. From 1973 to 1992, the government helped finance thousands of co-operative housing units through three successive co-op housing programs. From the mid-1980s on, the three largest provinces in Canada—Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia—also set up their own development programs to finance housing co-operatives.

It was at this time that the co-operative housing movement started to develop with the appearance of regional associations and development groups. These organizations worked with the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada to provide education, development and management services to an expanding number of Canadian housing co-ops. It is this long history that shapes the housing co-op movement today.

The fact is, co-op housing has helped us build communities we can be proud of. Co-op housing helps support people from diverse backgrounds and provides an affordable option for many low-income Ontarians. Housing co-ops frequently cost less to operate. Who calls co-ops home? They are families, women, single parents, seniors, visible minorities, new immigrants, people of aboriginal ancestry and disabled persons. As the minister has said many times, decent housing is so much more than just a shelter. It provides a strong foundation from which to find a job, raise a family and contribute to the strength of Ontario. It plays a key role in breaking the

cycle of poverty. We recognize the need for affordable housing and its role in supporting the growth and health of communities across Ontario.

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This proposed amendment supports our poverty reduction strategy and sets a strong foundation for a more efficient, accessible system for those who need safe and affordable housing.

December 2011 marked the third anniversary of the poverty reduction strategy. Much has happened since December 4, 2008, the date our Ontario government announced its first five-year poverty reduction commitment.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: That's working well.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Yes, but, especially in light of ongoing economic turmoil, much more needs to be done in order to meet the target. This government has focused its efforts primarily on children and families, but we have also taken steps to create opportunities for those most adversely affected by the economic downturn and to build the economic and social foundation to achieve our poverty reduction goal.

From 2008-09, the first year of the poverty reduction strategy, 20,000 children moved out of poverty. This means over 4% fewer children living in poverty. Poverty rates for single-mother-led households dropped from 43% in 2008 to 35% in 2009. The number of children living in households that could not afford two or more essential items has dropped from 12% in 2008 to less than 9% in 2009.

The report also focused on the costs associated with poverty in Ontario. This government, which has invested greatly in education, is aware that children from low-income families tend not to do as well in school as their peers. They often fall behind, drop out in greater numbers, and face higher rates of poverty as adults. The cost of poverty in Ontario has been estimated to be as high as \$13 billion per year when health care, criminal justice and lost productivity are taken into account.

Regarding Ontario's goal of reducing child poverty by 25%, Premier McGuinty stated that there is no shortage of evidence that if we don't address this problem in the early years, the cost will only be greater later on. Clearly, we cannot afford to ignore that nearly 1.7 million Ontarians live in poverty.

Our government recognized the need for affordable housing and its role in supporting the growth and health of communities across Ontario. This is why we developed the long-term affordable housing strategy, the first of its kind in Ontario. Our long-term housing strategy supports our poverty reduction strategy and sets a strong foundation for a more efficient, accessible system for those who need safe and affordable housing.

During our consultation on the strategy, we heard that the existing housing system was too complicated and created obstacles for those in need. Those who delivered the housing programs told us that because of the system, they were unable to develop the best possible services to those in need. Our strategy transformed the affordable

housing system. Our strategy focused on four key pillars: putting people first, creating strong partnerships, supporting affordable options, and accountability.

The long-term affordable housing strategy provides municipalities and housing providers with greater flexibility to deliver housing services, recognizing that communities have different housing needs. Their increased flexibility helps ensure that their resources are located to meet local needs and to improve outcomes for people. It helps make sure services are accountable and on the right track.

Speaker, the federal and provincial investment in the Affordable Housing for Ontario agreement that Minister Wynne announced on November 8, 2011, continues the goals set out in the long-term affordable housing strategy and the work that this government is doing to help address the housing needs in this province.

Our investment in the affordable housing for Ontario program, with the federal government, will create over 5,000 new jobs and will build or repair approximately 7,000 affordable housing units over four years in Ontario. That's about the size of a town like Hanover or Acton. The program represents a combined investment of \$481 million from the government of Canada and the province of Ontario. Ontario continues to build new affordable housing and repair existing units for Ontarians with housing needs. This is in addition to the province's overall investment of over \$2.5 billion since 2003, which has translated into the construction and repair of more than 270,000 housing units and the provision of 35,000 rent supplements and has increased over 57,000 jobs across our province.

The objective of the investment in affordable housing for Ontario program is to improve the living conditions of Canadians in need by improving access to affordable, sound, suitable and sustainable housing. This is one step towards helping Ontario families open doors to a safe, healthy and prosperous future. The investment in affordable housing for Ontario program will provide funding to create and repair affordable housing and provide rental and down-payment assistance to make housing more affordable.

The future of housing depends on sustained funding. While we are pleased that the federal government has made a short-term commitment to affordable housing through the Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario agreement, the future of housing depends on permanent, sustained funding to increase the supply of affordable housing and improve the condition of the existing social housing stock. Ontario needs a long-term funding commitment from the federal government that is fair to Ontarians and will help meet the needs of Ontario families. We know that a lack of affordable housing increases pressure on social programs and hinders economic growth. We encourage all members of the Legislature and our housing partners to work with us to call on the federal government to make a long-term housing funding commitment. Our government has been hard at work to tackle the pressing issues of ensuring affordable

and safe housing in this province now and in the future. But we need the federal government to be a full partner with us to achieve these goals.

If history teaches us one thing, Speaker, it is that we must work together to achieve better results. Our government has heard that there are frustrations with the current system. I want to assure the co-op housing sector that we are listening. We must be deliberate in our actions so that we can plan and invest in tomorrow. We must work together.

By strengthening the co-op housing sector, we are supporting affordable and safe housing for families throughout our province of Ontario. The proposed legislation is just one more step to help strengthen the co-op housing sector so that it can continue to provide a viable choice for Ontario families. Together, we are making a real difference in the lives of working families and for Ontario's most vulnerable households. This new process would be a win-win-win for co-op housing providers, their members and the justice system as well.

Speaker, I urge all members to support this important piece of legislation to help support co-ops and their members. I have to add that I'm also very grateful to see members of the co-op family here; they have been very actively engaged in promoting the benefits of this legislation. They've been advocating for the benefit of their members, and I have to say, Speaker, that on a number of occasions, I have been invited to attend some of their functions, and their membership is looking very, very—

Interruption.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Yes—to the actions of this House. As a matter of fact, at one of their do's, I was told, "Don't come back anymore unless you deliver on your promise."

Well, today, Speaker, I have to say that if it wasn't for their tireless, really dedicated commitment to making this possible, we wouldn't be here today. I think this is something that all the members of the House share, Speaker, and that all the members of the House would like to see. It's no gain for us personally, but it's a gain for all of us indirectly. It's a gain for those living in and serving on the co-ops. It's a gain for the justice system. It's savings for the government. It does great justice to the co-op management providers, and their residents as well. There is no downside to the effect of this legislation.

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To the justice—to the hard work that they did over the many years, Speaker—I indulge myself in saying thank you for the time that you have allocated for me to speak on this issue that I have participated in over the many years. It's good to see that finally it's coming to fruition. I would like to ask the members of the House, on behalf of all the members of all the co-op units in Ontario, to support this legislation. I thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome the members of the co-op housing community and commend them for their patience. I know that you've been waiting a long time because of procedural issues here, and I know that

our leader, Tim Hudak, would show great respect as well. I'm looking forward to our member, Mr. Clark, in terms of being critic on this. His remarks will be fair and reasonable; I'm sure of that.

I did listen to the minister. I think we certainly are in agreement with removing this from a court process. A costly wrangling in the courts costs people money, and having a dispute resolution with the Landlord and Tenant Act—I found the Landlord and Tenant Act a bit unbalanced at the time as well. It needs to be restructured so that it's fair to both parties in the discussion. I would say that right now in my riding I get more complaints from landlords, because it isn't fair. There have been quite a few media pieces talking about the inordinate abuse that some landlords take, which spoils it for all those people who are renters, who can't afford to own.

But I would say that the member from York West was reasonable in his remarks, and all I can say is that if people act reasonably and deal with the facts as they are and keep the partisanship out of it, you'll find that you'll get a better solution. This is what we're looking for: a process that's reasonable and fair and listens to both sides of the discussion. At times that happens here in Queen's Park—and I was a bit disappointed today, earlier, that the Premier said there should be a free vote. In many cases they are free votes. We vote for the difference between right and wrong as we see it. We always try to vote for things that are truthful. It's the same process here in Bill 65. I think it would be the right thing to help co-op housing, because affordability is a big issue—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you to the co-ops for being patient and for being here again today, and for being so tenacious about this. The wheels of democracy are slow, as you know. It was about a year ago, I think, that you were initially in my office to talk about this bill, and it isn't the first time that this bill has been before the Legislative Assembly, so it is a long time coming. It certainly will improve the efficiency as well as the costs to co-op housing, as well as to tenants.

The NDP certainly has support for this bill, but we also have support and have introduced a number of other housing bills over the year that we're going to be revisiting during this term.

The minister spoke this morning initially to this bill and talked about that members on the other side of the House probably were going to say that the government has not done enough, that at least one of us was going to say that. I would say that probably 50 of us are going to say that as we get to speak to Bill 65. What the government really needs to do is to develop long-term funding strategy targets for affordable housing, because the list has increased from 156,000 households waiting at the end of December 2011 to 170,000 households waiting, so an increase of 14,000 households waiting in a period of less than a year.

I look forward to debating this issue some more over the next few days, and hopefully we'll get this passed really soon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did appreciate the remarks this morning by my colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the parliamentary assistant, the member from York West.

Of course, we have a long history of co-operatives in the province of Ontario, be it farm co-ops, insurance co-ops or indeed housing co-ops. I certainly want to acknowledge Mr. Cooper. I remember him when he, at the first opportunity, late after the election of 2003, during the co-op information day here at Queen's Park, was talking about the very issues today that are in the proposal in Bill 65.

I'd just like to get on the record, Madam Speaker, that just recently we had a fire at a co-op in Peterborough, the Leta Brownscombe co-op in the north end of Peterborough. You could see the spirit of the people in the co-op, who banded together, working with the city of Peterborough and indeed the ministry, to repair the damage that was done in a very serious fire. Thank goodness there was no loss of life that occurred. But that, I think, is emblematic of the kind of spirit that we have in the co-operative movement in the province of Ontario.

It's interesting to note: I think this bill is an opportunity for all sides of the House to co-operate, to make sure that we can indeed pass this legislation. I noticed in the spring of this year that the member from Leeds-Grenville, the member from Welland, the former very-articulate PC critic on housing, Ms. Savoline, and indeed the leader of the third party, Ms. Horwath, have all generally supported the kinds of changes that are being proposed in Bill 65. It's an opportunity for all of us to come together, move this forward and get it passed in the best interests of the co-op movement in the province of Ontario.

Indeed, I think the remarks this morning, the two-minutes after the speeches by both the minister and parliamentary assistant, bode well for the future, that we get this particular bill passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comment?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to provide a couple of minutes of comments and observations on the introduction and the lead speech by the government for Bill 65.

I also want to take the opportunity, as the other members have, to welcome representatives from the co-op industry here today. These people are very, very patient with government. We've been—"we" meaning collectively members of the Legislative Assembly—talking about this change for about five years, so I think we all agree it's about time. In a minority Parliament, it's nice and refreshing to actually have a piece of legislation that has support from all three parties. So I appreciate and welcome you to the chamber this morning.

I also want to remind members that next month, on October 17, we have the annual co-operative housing day, so you all get a chance to tell them to their face how we're going to make sure that Bill 65 gets piloted

through this place. Maybe by then, the government House leader will have some committees organized so we can actually move the bill forward and have some public hearings and some public comment. So they're very patient.

I also want, in the little bit of time I have left, to let members know that there is co-operative housing in 95 of Ontario's 107 ridings, so it's very important. It affects 90% of MPPs in this place. Co-ops provide a very valuable mix in our communities. I know I have in my community the Seaway housing co-op and the Shepherd's Green Co-operative, and I want to thank them for their commitment.

We look forward to further debate. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for York West, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's very encouraging to hear the comments from all members of the House. It's a wonderful spirit of co-operation that pervades in the House today, and I wish it would continue for many, many days and years to come.

I think the members of the co-operative federation would go back today not only happy but happier if we were to see the approval move forward today. But knowing how the legislative agenda works through the House here, there is a bit more work. Yes, they have been very patient in dealing with this issue. It will be good to move it forward—I sense that there is strong support from all members of the House, which is good—for further input, and hopefully bring it back as quickly as possible.

I hope that during the consultation process, indeed, not only will we see further comments from the co-op federation and membership at large themselves, but from the general public for any input to make it even better, to strengthen it and bring this to a head.

There is no question about it, Speaker: This serves the co-operatives and their members very well. It's something that should have been done moons ago, but it's here now. And I have to say, again, to all members of the House: Thank you for your support, and to the members of the co-op federation for being so faithful to their membership and for working hard to see that indeed this will come to happen.

Madam Speaker, it was good to have your time. I thank you very much. On behalf of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, I want to thank all the members for participating in the debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce retired Admiral Dan McNeil and Ian Raven, the Elgin Military Museum

director. Both are here for a meeting with Mr. Chan about Project Ojibwa, the sub we're bringing to Port Burwell.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's my pleasure and honour to have with us today a former parliamentarian who served with distinction, from my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West, Dr. Doug Galt; his lovely wife and good friend, Cathy; and Rose Mary and her husband, Hastie. Thank you very much.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to introduce some representatives we have here from Lakehead University of Thunder Bay satellite campus in Orillia: the president and vice-chancellor, Dr. Brian Stevenson; Debbie Comuzzi, vice-president of external relations; and Richard Longtin, manager of alumni relations. Welcome. Lakehead is a great university—a new law school is coming there next year.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Visiting Parliament today, we have a class from St. Gerard Majella school. I have no idea if that is the class or if they are still wandering through our beautiful building here. However, I wish them a good stay, good enjoyment, good visit, and I welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to introduce a grade 5 class from St. Christopher school in my riding. They're touring the Legislature, and they'll be here in a few minutes.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to the chamber a constituent of mine: Mr. Peter Seemann. Welcome.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to introduce a grade 5 class from St. Bernard school in the great riding of York South—Weston.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I just want to say that the member from York—Simcoe pre-empted my introduction of Mr. Peter Seemann, so I'd like to do it again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Consider it done.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a delegation from the finance portfolio committee of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature of South Africa. We welcome them to our House today.

I also beg your indulgence, as my voice is leaving me, and given the situation of today, I would hope and ask that the members provide me with a little leeway so that they can hear my rulings and hear me speak. I will do my best without imposing any kind of restrictions on you. The Speaker has a few rulings—or I have a few rulings.

ANNUAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2011-12 annual report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, entitled *Losing Our Touch, Part 2*.

The member from Beaches—East York has given me written notice of his intention to raise a point of privilege relating to the lighting levels in the legislative chamber. I

will deal with this point of privilege without hearing from the member, as standing order 21(b) permits me to do.

I believe that he may now know that the matter he raises does not fall under the defined head of "privilege" enjoyed by the members of this House. Any member seeking to draw attention to any failure or deficiency of equipment or furnishings in this chamber may do so by advising the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Clerk or myself privately.

I'm also prepared to rule on another. The member from Nickel Belt has given me written notice of her intention to raise a point of privilege relating to the question of whether a witness who gave testimony to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on the Ornge air ambulance issue is now being intimidated or retaliated against as a result of that testimony.

In her notice, the member advises me that the public accounts committee as a whole had considered and was concerned by this matter and had earlier taken steps to begin to deal with it prior to the lapsing of the committee's membership on September 9. In the interim, the file has evolved, and the member now seeks to bring the matter before the House in the face of the unavailability of the committee to deal with this new information.

I want to advise the member from Nickel Belt that I will deal with this point of privilege without hearing from the member, as standing order 21(b) permits me to do. Notwithstanding the member's stated conundrum that, while committee matters need to be dealt with in committee, there is currently no committee membership to do so. Nonetheless, it must be the committee that deals with this matter first. If I were to presume to rule on this matter now, I would effectively be substituting my judgment for the committee's, which would have intimate knowledge I don't have of all the nuances involved. I would also be substituting my judgment for that of the House, which is first entitled to receive reports from committees on such matters and to determine the method of dealing with them.

I acknowledge that the current committee situation is unusual. However, I have to assume that committees will eventually be struck. At that time, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts may wish to deal with the serious issue that the member has raised with me.

For these reasons, I must rule that the proposed point of privilege is premature.

I thank the members for their points of privilege.

Mr. Frank Klees: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member for Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, I have heard your ruling, and of course we accept it. At issue, however, is the employment of an individual who came before a committee of this House. There is no question that he is in jeopardy of losing his job for no other reason but for the fact that he had the courage to come forward to speak to our committee. I believe that this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While I appreciate the member's comments, I have made my ruling. As such, the issue is to be dealt with at committee.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you've spent Ontario into a huge hole. In fact, you've increased the cost of public services by 46% when it comes to wages and benefits, despite the economy crawling along. We, for about a year now since the election, have expected some legislation to deal with this. You brought forward a proposal last week. Can you tell me on what page of your proposal last week, when it comes to collective bargaining for government unions, you actually use the words "wage freeze" in that proposed legislation? What page?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for his question, but I want to talk about the elephant in the room. I want to talk about a motion, Speaker. They closed off debate, Speaker. We'll take this opportunity to speak to a very important motion.

The fact of the matter is—

Interjections.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I've already acknowledged, I'm having some difficulty with my voice. It's obvious that some of you are not having difficulty with your voice, and I would ask you to tone it down. From this point on, I will identify individual members.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, there are two separate matters that will be treated in the motion we'll be voting on momentarily. One of those would refer the matter of the gas plant relocation to a committee. We support that wholeheartedly, and I want to be very clear on that, Speaker. But there's a secondary issue that is without precedent in the 220-year rich history of this Legislature, and that is the matter of contempt moved against the Honourable Chris Bentley. I'm saying to my honourable colleague that he should retract that part of it, Speaker, so that together we can vote on a motion that sends the appropriate matter before a committee.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Premier, in response, let me address the true elephant in the room.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, that kind of stage management we just saw was so incredibly disrespectful to the members, to the matter at hand and the taxpayers who have to foot the bill.

Here's the real elephant in the room, seeing the attitude of government members. We're talking there about a \$650-million minimum payment from taxpayers to

move power plants to save Liberal seats. Here's the issue I have: There's no contrition—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development and Innovation will come to order. The Minister of Finance will come to order. The member from Peterborough will come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: So here's the sad issue: There is no contrition, no regret, no apology from the Premier, despite spending \$650 million and then burying documents. You know what that tells me, Speaker, because there's no apology, no contrition? If he gets the chance, he's going to do it all over again, and we won't apologize for holding you to account.

I'll ask the Premier again: Could you please direct me to the page of your proposed bill that actually says "a wage freeze" for collective bargaining in the province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, Speaker, I want to make it perfectly clear that we are more than happy to refer the matter of the gas plant relocation to this committee. That is not an issue for our government.

Our concern is this: The heavy hand of the majority opposition of this Legislature, Speaker, seeks to use the power of this Parliament against one honourable individual. This is without precedent in 220 years of parliamentary history. I say to my honourable colleagues: While it is within their rights to do so, no other Parliament has ever chosen to do so, because it is fundamentally wrong. I ask them to acknowledge that, Speaker. I ask them to refer the appropriate matter to a committee.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, it's regrettable the Premier didn't show any of that kind of emotion when he stood up for defending the interests of taxpayers in the province of Ontario, who are on the hook for \$650 million.

Let me ask the Premier one more time—and I think I've been very clear, Speaker—if the Premier could point out on exactly what page of his proposed bill where he says it will bring in a wage freeze—those words, "wage freeze"—or even zero, when it comes to collective bargaining for government unions in the province of Ontario. I can't find the page. Perhaps the Premier will actually point that out for me today.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I want to remind my honourable colleague that in 1995, the PC government cancelled the Eglinton and Sheppard lines, at a cost of \$260 million. There was no movement among the opposition members or the Parliament of the day to send this to committee or to move on contempt.

I want to remind my honourable colleagues that since 1792, through the War of 1812, the industrialization of our province, the First World War, through Prohibition, the Great Depression, the Second World War, a series of minority governments and coalitions in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s which saw government held by all three parties, through the advent of the Internet, through globalization and then our most recent recession, no

Parliament has ever moved contempt in the way that this one has, and to move beyond that to seek punishment of an individual member.

What they're doing is reprehensible. It is shameful. It is out of keeping with the standards to which we should all adhere.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order. Thank you.

New question.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier, Speaker. The—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We will get through this. And just before you continue, I've already mentioned you by riding.

Leader?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier, Speaker: Perhaps the Premier shouldn't have ordered the minister to bury the documents and then thrown him under the bus—

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—so spare me the phony outrage.

I ask the Premier—again, I've asked him several times to point out exactly on what page he uses the words “wage freeze” in his proposal from last week. The Premier refuses to answer that question because those words are not actually in the proposal.

Let me ask the Premier then again: Recently you signed an agreement with 1,200 MPAC employees, the tax assessors in the province, that gives them an 8.5% pay raise that goes until December 31, 2015. Premier, are you going to freeze their wages now or are you going to give them an 8.5% pay increase and then freeze them in 2015 or not at all? Which does your bill actually do?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I believe that in their heart of hearts, there are many members of the opposition who understand that they have stepped over a line which should govern our behaviour. I believe that in their heart of hearts, there are many members of the opposition who understand that there is something bigger in this place, something that transcends partisan lines, something that speaks to our duty and tradition and honour and fundamental respect that we share for each other.

To that end, Speaker, I want to put my honourable colleagues on notice that we will be shortly seeking unanimous consent to ensure that we refer the appropriate matter off to committee for consideration—that is the matter of the gas plants—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty:—shortly, Speaker, I said—and we will be hiving off that part that has to do with contempt, because my honourable colleagues understand that it is in the public interest that we do so. I ask my

honourable colleagues to consider that and to ready themselves for that motion, seeking unanimous consent.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier uses the term “crossing the line.” I'll ask the Premier, did it ever occur to you that spending \$650 million of taxpayer money to save Liberal seats, then obstructing the work of the Legislature by burying documents—Speaker, if that's not crossing the line, I don't know what is. We're proud to stand up for Ontario taxpayers.

Perhaps I could get a response from the Premier to the questions that I've addressed to him. Premier, your agreement with MPAC will give an 8.5% raise to the union workers at MPAC. It expires in 2015. So let me ask the Premier again: Are you freezing MPAC's wages at the current rates, are you planning to actually give them an 8.5% increase and then freeze their wages, or do you plan on just kicking this can down the road?

Our view: an across-the-board wage freeze for all of us immediately; no exceptions, no special deals. It will save us \$2 billion. Why don't you take the Ontario PC plan, since you don't seem to have one?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier, before I come to you, the Minister of Finance will come to order—second time.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: So many of the assertions made by my honourable colleague in his question are without foundation in fact, but I will return to the important motion that we're all facing today.

I ask my honourable colleague—in addition to considering that motion we'll be putting forward, seeking unanimous consent to refer the appropriate matter to committee—if he will permit his colleagues a free vote in the matter before us so that we can all exercise our own conscience, as I call upon all honourable colleagues and as I appeal to the better angels of their nature, again understanding that while there is a public interest to be found in considering the matter of the relocation of the gas plants, there is none to be found in the small, petty, partisan and vindictive approach related to the pursuit of a contempt motion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, the Premier references better angels of nature. It's too bad he didn't seek out any of those angels when he spent \$650 million to move hydro plants out of Liberal ridings to win seats. He looked for no guidance from angels when they buried documents that obstructed this Legislature.

I want to say I'm darned proud of the members of the assembly on the PC side who have already stood on their feet, with great, passionate speeches, to hold this government to account and stand up for what's right and stand up for taxpayers in our province.

Let me get to my question again, Premier. TTC workers were recently awarded a 6% pay increase. That will go until March 31, 2014. Could the Premier please describe to me exactly how your proposal impacts on the TTC workers? We've seen the city of Toronto have to contemplate fare increases or service cuts to make up that \$100 million that was outside any kind of pay freeze. How does your bill exactly deal with this TTC 6% increase?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Back to the matter of the motion and back to the issue of the unprecedented pursuit, on the part of a heavy-handed majority opposition, of a contempt motion against a member of the government: I say to my honourable colleague that he and I, together with the leader of the third party, share a heavier responsibility, I would argue. It is to help set the tone, help establish the tenor and help achieve a certain standard.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That's what leadership's about.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's what leadership is fundamentally all about. I would encourage my honourable colleague to speak to his colleagues within his caucus and help them understand that we will come and we will go. We will do the best that we can as participants in this magnificent process, but our turn and our time will come to an end here.

Recognizing that, we also understand there's something bigger than any one of us. There's the matter of tradition and honour and respect. They have clearly crossed that line. They are failing to adhere to that tradition.

I ask him to set the appropriate tone, the appropriate standard, on behalf of his colleagues.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Earlier this morning, the Premier asked that I make today's vote on whether to send the breach-of-privilege motion to committee a free vote. Well, I plan to do that. Can the Premier tell us, though, the last time he granted his MPPs a free vote?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question, Speaker. I appreciate the commitment to a free vote, but it has been said that some events in life should not be left unremarked.

Yesterday, the NDP, in a dramatic departure from 20 years of principled history, decided they were going to support a closure motion in this Legislature. Interesting; very interesting. They did so as part of the heavy hand of a majority opposition because it served their interests.

I think it is remarkable, it is noteworthy and, frankly, it is unprincipled for that member to have supported that closure motion, which cut off debate, which would have permitted more members of the government here to speak to a very important motion. I ask her to look at herself in the mirror and understand why she led that departure.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementarily.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we were respecting the opposition member whose motion it was, who decided that enough debate had occurred, and so we decided that we were going to support their decision.

The people of Ontario are very tired of a Premier who thinks that rules apply to everyone but himself, his party and his government. It's this Premier who allowed his campaign team to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in a purely political move. The people will be paying for those costs for years and years to come.

Now this Premier has the gall to claim that he doesn't want this to be political. Does he really expect anyone to take him seriously?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the honourable leader of the third party's interpretation—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —but I prefer my own particular representation.

I want to remind my honourable colleague—she may or may not remember this, but I sat over there in the back row in 1991, and I recall in those days when the NDP government decided in 1991 to cancel the Red Hill Creek Expressway. That had been the subject of a broad community effort in Hamilton for some 25 years. It had been approved by the previous government in cabinet. It had been taken to the Superior Court of Ontario, in fact, as well, and that decision was upheld. But that government of the day, the NDP government, cancelled that, at a cost of \$70 million. Just as the PC government cancelled the subway, that NDP government cancelled the Red Hill Creek Expressway. They said that it was in the public interest to do so. The opposition of the day—we believed them, and we allowed them that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementarily.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has played politics with the people of Ontario, and the people of Ontario are the ones now paying the price. The Premier played politics when he cancelled the plants. The Premier played politics when he refused to disclose the details. The Premier played politics when he shut his energy minister out of all of the discussions. Does he really expect anyone to believe that he is now above narrow partisan politics when for years he has relentlessly put politics over any sense of principle whatsoever?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, when it comes to the cancellation of the gas plants, both Hansard and the broader public media record will make it perfectly clear that we and the opposition are in violent agreement. We have all agreed that those plants should be cancelled.

What I'm saying to my honourable colleague is that the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances now is to refer to committee those matters that are specific to the relocation of the gas plants. I think in particular we should be looking at the appropriate standards for siting new gas plants and we should be looking at ways to better reconcile two competing interests. What do we do when it comes to making public documentation which could compromise taxpayer interests? I think that's an important consideration for the committee.

1100

But to the matter of pursuing contempt, I cannot understand why the leader of the third party and her caucus are so bent, so determined in pursuing a contempt motion, something that is without precedent in the rich 220-year history of this Legislature.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier—but I think the Premier needs to know that the appropriate thing to do is to give up the documents when they're requested by the opposition. That's the appropriate thing.

This weekend, the Premier said that the energy minister shouldn't be blamed at all for the private power boondoggles in Mississauga and Oakville, especially since the decision to break the contracts wasn't even made on his watch—this is what the Premier said. Is the Premier ready to accept some responsibility himself, then, for his role in this mess?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, Speaker, we have the support of both opposition parties when it comes to the relocation of these gas plants.

I want to return to the matter of the motion at hand and I want my honourable colleagues opposite to confront the stark reality of what it is they're about to do. What they're saying they want to do is pursue a contempt motion against one honourable colleague in this House. That is the Minister of Energy, the Honourable Chris Bentley. This is an MPP who works hard on behalf of his constituents. This is a minister of the crown who does his very best on behalf of the people of Ontario. This is a distinguished member of the Ontario bar. This is a father and this is a husband.

The members opposite seek to use the heavy power of a majority opposition against one individual, honourable colleague. It is without precedent in 220 years. I suggest to my honourable colleague that it is wrong and she should admit so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, whether the Premier likes it or not, what we are simply doing is our job: holding this government to account. We have to do that because this is what people see. They see a Liberal Party, facing plunging polls, making a political decision and hiding the cost of that decision until after the election.

It's clear that the current energy minister isn't solely responsible for this mess. In fact, it's clear that the en-

ergy minister at the time of the cancellations wasn't even making the decisions either. Is the Premier ready to step up and take some responsibility, or will he be blaming everybody else but himself?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague says that using the full force of this Legislature against one honourable colleague in pursuing a contempt motion is just doing her job. Then I say respectfully to my honourable colleague that she doesn't understand the job.

There is nothing wrong with highly charged, energized and even electric partisan debate—there is nothing wrong with that. In fact, that serves the greater public interest. But when you use the full force of the Ontario Legislature, a Legislature representing 13 million Ontarians, against one individual member in pursuit of a contempt motion as a matter of petty, partisan, shallow, self-interested, mean-spirited politics, that is fundamentally wrong. That is not in keeping with our jobs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Final supplementary, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker.

With all due respect to the Premier, I think it will be the people of this province who decide who knows how to do their job.

The Premier says he wants to make the tough decisions. The Premier says he wants to avoid easy politics. Yet when he's faced with a tough political decision on gas plant contracts that he signed, he quietly cuts the deal, and he did everything he could in the meantime to ensure the public didn't know about the multi-billion-dollar cost involved.

At what point is he going to stop trying to deflect the blame everywhere else, take some responsibility and let the Legislature actually do its job?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, every once in a while, on rare occasions, we are given the opportunity to more fully consider what we're doing here, what we're all about, to whom we are accountable and, in particular, what it is that we owe to each other. I would argue that we owe each other a fundamental respect, a fundamental understanding that we all work hard, that we all do our very best, that we all uphold the ideals that inspire our efforts and inform our thinking.

But we also understand there's a certain line which we should never cross. It's a line that has been respected by 220 years of Parliaments that have served in this Legislature. I suggest to my honourable colleagues that they are crossing that line today, Speaker. I ask them to think carefully before they vote on today's motion; they understand the consequences both in terms of the departure from tradition here and the unprecedented consequences this would have for one of our honourable colleagues.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is to the Premier. Premier, to the untrained eye, it has become impossible to determine whether your decisions of late are calculated

or reek of indifference. Your energy minister initially refused to produce documents requested by a standing committee of this Legislature. When a *prima facie* breach of privilege had been established, your government dug in its heels before handing over blank, incomplete and heavily redacted documents at the 11th hour. Time and time again your government has refused to reconstitute committees to get on with the business of this Legislature.

Premier, which is it? Are you indifferent or calculated? Are you just the puppet master pulling strings behind the scenes, or have you just stopped caring about the province of Ontario that you were elected to lead?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the government House leader.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: It's always good to be liked, Mr. Speaker.

Let's review the last couple of months. The Minister of Energy appeared in front of the estimates committee and made a case about two competing interests in terms of the documents that were in question. You ruled, Mr. Speaker, that government House leaders should sit down and find a way forward. I came forward to my fellow House leaders with two pathways forward and a willingness to discuss, a willingness to compromise, and they said forget it. They didn't care about taxpayers' interests. They didn't care about any of the competing interests that were going out the window.

Then what happened? We had a debate here in this Legislature where I gave notice to you and to the House leaders across the way, to every member of this Legislature, that we wished to come forward with an amendment, an amendment which would have charged the committee to look into the gas plant issue, to look into this issue of competing interests in front of committee. What they did was reprehensible: They shut down debate. They did not allow us to participate. They did not allow us to move that amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, the funny thing is, no one believes that government actually respects taxpayers. While we think that \$650 million squandered on gas plants that aren't going to be built or haven't been built yet, to buy seats instead of building hospitals, roads, bridges, schools, providing MRIs and cancer treatments—the reality is the reason why this contempt motion has been put forward is because they withheld documents and kept Ontarians in the dark. All the while they haven't apologized. They haven't said, "I'm sorry." They haven't done anything to show that they aren't in contempt of this Legislature.

My question to the Premier: If he has suddenly become sympathetic to the procedures of the Ontario Legislature, why does he remain determined to prevent the

opposition from seeking the truth? What are you afraid of?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, what we saw yesterday was a display of cynical, vindictive partisan politics on the part of the opposition.

We gave notice to all members of this House that we wanted to move forward with an amendment to the motion, an amendment which would have charged the committee to look into a number of matters related to the gas plants but, at the same time, would not have targeted an honourable member of this Legislature. The opposition did not even have the decency to allow us to introduce that amendment and allow us to have debate here. I think if anyone wants to apologize about the vindictive nature of this, it's that honourable member and his party across the way, along with their friends in the New Democratic Party.

1110

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. As details leak out on this government's secret, private gas plant deals, it looks more and more like it's throwing good money after bad. We now know this government has signed a string of sweetheart deals with private energy companies, promising them billions of ratepayers' dollars, even if they don't produce a single watt of energy.

Will this government ask the Auditor General to take a look at its secret gas plant deals or will it continue to shovel Ontarians' hard-earned cash into the pockets of those private energy companies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, as my honourable colleague would know, the auditor's already looking at Mississauga, and the auditor had said at public accounts with respect to the other matter, that he would wait until negotiations were concluded. That's exactly what's happened.

Let's be clear on where we've come: There were brownouts and blackouts in 2001, 2002 and 2003. We made sure that we could bring on new generation to keep the lights on. The templates of those contracts are all public. They're up on the website. We've been very clear in what we're doing. We're going to make sure the people of Ontario have clean, reliable power at an appropriate cost.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Premier, let's look at where we are now. As part of the Oakville cancellation deal, energy giant TransCanada is guaranteed revenue of \$3.3 billion over the next two decades for its eastern Ontario power plant, no matter how much power it produces.

It's the Auditor General's job to determine whether Ontario is getting value for money. Why won't this government direct the Auditor General to examine these secret sweetheart deals with private power companies?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, there is no news here. In order to make sure we have the power for the hot days and the cold days, you have to have power generators who are prepared to produce, so you enter into long-term contracts with them so they'll build the facility, run the facility and produce. We have those long-term contracts with both publicly owned and privately owned—that's a fact. There's nothing new here.

At the end of the day, Ontarians expect that families and businesses will have reliable power, clean power, and that it will be there when they need it. The only way to ensure that is for these long-term contracts to be put in place to make sure that when the switch goes on, the power's there—the power that we need. That's why Ontario had reliable power over the past six or seven months, and many other jurisdictions in North America did not.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, improving care for mental health and addiction patients and reducing the stigma surrounding mental health are two goals that this government is working very hard to accomplish. Our commitment to improving mental health care for Ontarians includes better quality patient care, as well as better access to facilities which provide that care. We know that well-funded facilities mean better care for patients.

As a member for Toronto, I know that the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health provides critical support for those Ontarians, young and old, suffering from issues related to mental health and addiction. Through you to the minister: What is being done at CAMH to improve access to quality patient care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Don Valley East for this very important question.

CAMH does remarkable work for people facing mental health and addictions challenges. I was very proud in June to join staff, clients, community members and neighbourhood members to celebrate the official opening of the second phase of the CAMH Queen Street redevelopment project. It has helped to build a new kind of hospital, one that reflects the 21st-century approach to treating mental health and addictions. We have come a very long way in changing the attitudes and opinions about care for mental health and addictions patients in this province. This latest redevelopment helps drive this change by providing more treatment in a community setting. We know it's vital for people facing mental health and addictions challenges to remain part of the community. It helps battle stigma and it speeds up recovery.

Importantly, the redevelopment of CAMH supports the goals of our action plan for health care, particularly when it comes to mental health.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Minister. I know that this is just one of the many exciting developments for mental health in Ontario.

We know that one in five Ontarians experiences a mental illness or addiction issue in their lifetime, meaning that all of us are impacted in some type of way. This is why we continue to invest in this area. Given that CAMH is on Queen Street and it's just minutes away from the Legislature, I'm sure that many of us are curious about what we might see next time we walk by.

Speaker, through you to the minister, what physical improvements are part of this latest redevelopment project?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you again. I do invite all members of this Legislature to visit the new CAMH; I know you'll be very, very pleased at what you see.

The latest CAMH redevelopment has revitalized the neighbourhood along Queen Street West. The physical structure has been transformed from an outdated institution into a welcoming, inclusive and healing-focused environment. In particular, I would urge you to keep an eye out for three new buildings, for new streets, green space and affordable housing. As always, I would like to thank all of the community partners who made this redevelopment a reality, as well as all of those remarkable front-line workers and all who made this project a reality. The new CAMH serves as a model for our action plan for health care in its focus on patient-centred care. It's just one more way that we're providing the right care at the right time in the right place.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, the government House leader continues to insist that we have received all of the Mississauga and Oakville documents, yet we have countless examples of covered-over documents. Let me draw your attention to an email from your senior communications adviser. It states, "I'd appreciate if you could look at the copy and see if there are any inaccuracies." But, Minister, the rest of the copy has been blanked out. It's been covered up here. I can go to another; it says, "Rick may not completely agree with the third option." Speaker, the third option is a slide about where they were going to locate something, but sadly, it, too, has been covered over; it's been covered up.

So my question to the minister is: What is so damning on these redacted documents that they—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You can't say indirectly what you tried to say directly in one of the comments. But I would only offer you a caution: The way in which you worded it could be interpreted two different ways.

I will be more forceful if it continues. Thank you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My final question is: What are you hiding in these documents?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The ministry prepared the documents and provided the documents that were responsive to the motion. The ministry prepared them according to the procedures that they've long used, and I understand the Ontario Power Authority did exactly the same thing. There are, as has already been said, many double-sided pages in the documents that were the result of double-sided photocopying when there was nothing underneath. But once again, the ministry prepared the documents according to the procedures that they've long used.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: There's nothing double-sided about this document. It's an email that has been clearly redacted. But in the few documents that aren't whited out, we learned some dramatic news. Here's a slide that states that "the province would be pleased if the ... negotiated solution (in Oakville) does not exceed \$1.2 billion." It's followed by one that states that TransCanada, the Oakville proponent, rejected the government's settlement proposal of \$712 million.

So, Minister, the entire business world is waiting to hear the secret of how you settled a \$1-billion dispute, in your own words, for \$40 million—and, quite frankly, nobody believes you.

1120

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: There you have it, Speaker. There you have it. We negotiated hard on behalf of the people of Ontario to move the plants, to stop construction—which all three parties support—to relocate the plants to make sure that we got electricity out of the result. We've ended up with one in Lambton, which has long been an energy centre; another one is going to Lennox, long an energy centre, and the cost of that has been out for those to see—in the case of Oakville, \$40 million down and a 20-year contract for the same 900-megawatt facility, using the turbines that had been procured for the other one. That's the bottom line—and all the negotiations concluded in the agreement we've got on Oakville.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is for the Premier, if somebody can get his attention. I'll just wait for him to take his seat. I know he's doing something else.

Premier, you've gone out of your way to try to characterize this vote today as being a vote of contempt. You know as well as I do that this vote is about striking a committee to look into this issue. So my question to you, Premier, is a very simple one. Under standing order 118, the members of the committee—the majority—can request that the committee meet, and you have up to 10 sessional days to call the committee. Are you going to stall, for 10 sessional days, this committee being struck?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I think that any reasonable person who is watching what happened yesterday would realize the vindictiveness of the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, we gave notice through all House leaders that we were prepared to support a motion which would allow this committee to look into aspects of the gas plant issue, to look into this whole issue of balancing interests in front of a committee. Instead, what happened is, debate was cut down in this Legislature. Debate was stopped in this Legislature.

As the Premier referenced earlier, considering the long and proud history of the New Democratic Party—who like to remind this Legislature that they don't favour time allocation; they don't favour closure—I think it was a sad shock for all of us to see debate in this Legislature stopped by the opposition.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, the shock, Mr. Speaker, is the taxpayer getting the bill; that's the shock.

Under standing order 118, you have up to 10 sessional days to have this committee meet. My question was very specific: Do you plan on stalling the creation of this committee by 10 sessional days? Yes or no?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'm not going to presume how the vote is going to go in the next half-hour.

Second of all, I have great respect for the Chair of the committee and the members of the committee—that they will govern themselves according to the rules that are outlined in this motion.

Again, I think it is very, very important that we put on the record the fact that we gave notice to this House. We gave notice to you, to the government House leaders, to every member, that we were prepared to reach a compromise motion, which would allow the committee to look into many aspects of this situation, to look into the challenges of governing both the public interest, the taxpayers' interest and the rights of committees to get documents. Instead, debate was shut down in this Legislature so they could move forward with a motion which is attacking an honourable member of this place.

ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE

M. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question s'adresse à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Nous avons célébré récemment la journée des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. J'espère que tous nos amis francophones et francophiles partout en province ont passé une belle journée officielle.

Le gouvernement McGuinty présente un bilan solide en ce qui concerne les affaires francophones en Ontario, et nous avons de la chance de compter sur une ministre aussi dynamique que la ministre Meilleur pour répondre aux besoins des francophones.

Cependant, pour assurer que la francophonie reste une part entière de notre patrimoine et continue de prospérer,

main dans la main, avec la majorité anglophone, nous devons continuer à investir dans le système d'éducation, notamment pour assurer l'accès des francophones aux institutions postsecondaires.

Est-ce que la ministre peut me dire ce que le gouvernement fait pour favoriser l'accès des francophones au niveau postsecondaire?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: L'accès au système d'éducation, c'est-à-dire en français, au niveau postsecondaire est un élément clé du développement de la communauté franco-ontarienne. C'est la raison pour laquelle le gouvernement reconnaît l'importance de donner aux élèves francophones accès à une plus grande gamme de programmes postsecondaires en français, en investissant dans le secteur postsecondaire.

Au mois d'août 2011, le gouvernement a adopté la politique d'aménagement linguistique pour le secteur d'éducation et de formation postsecondaire afin d'améliorer l'accès et la qualité des programmes de langue française, ainsi que d'encourager la participation et la rétention des étudiants. C'est pourquoi nous avons augmenté le financement de l'éducation postsecondaire en langue française de plus de 66 % entre 2003-2004 et 2010-2011.

Pour 2011-2012, ce financement ciblé s'élevait à 85,5 millions de dollars, et nous en voyons les résultats : la proportion des jeunes ontariens de 25 à 34 ans qui détiennent un diplôme universitaire est maintenant plus élevée chez les Franco-Ontariens que chez les Anglo-Ontariens et même les Québécois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Merci, madame la Ministre. C'est une réponse encourageante. Je suis heureux d'apprendre que le gouvernement continue d'investir dans nos institutions postsecondaires de langue française. Nous devons rester engagés aux côtés des jeunes francophones pour assurer qu'ils ont accès à l'éducation dont ils ont besoin pour trouver de bons emplois et continuer à vivre dans leur langue en harmonie en Ontario.

Je me félicite de tous ces investissements, mais quels sont les résultats? Est-ce que la ministre peut nous éclairer sur la présence et le poids des étudiants francophones en Ontario? Que fait-on pour faciliter l'accès des francophones au niveau postsecondaire?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités.

L'hon. Glen R. Murray: Merci, monsieur l'Orateur. Comme la ministre responsable des affaires francophones l'a dit, nous avons augmenté le financement de l'éducation postsecondaire en langue française de plus de 66 % depuis 2003.

Il convient de souligner que depuis le lancement du programme de réduction de 30 % des frais de scolarité en Ontario en janvier 2012, plus de 200 000 étudiants et leur famille ont constaté une réduction de 30 % des droits de scolarité. Ce nombre inclut une majorité de jeunes francophones ontariens comme les 1 218 étudiants inscrits à des programmes à temps plein du Collège Boréal et de La Cité collégiale, et environ 1 500 étudiants

francophones de l'Université d'Ottawa et de l'Université Laurentienne qui ont aussi reçu la subvention. Cela signifie qu'au moins 2 700 étudiants francophones en tout ont bénéficié de la subvention du programme de réduction de 30 %.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Premier. Premier, last week we learned that the Liberal campaign's seat-saver program was going to cost taxpayers \$650 million. Today you called for a free vote on this motion. Each Liberal member should recognize that a vote against this motion is a vote against government transparency, a vote against government accountability, a vote against parliamentary privilege, and most importantly, Mr. Premier, it's a smack in the face of the hard-working people of Ontario, who deserve to know the true cost of the Liberal seat-saver program.

Premier, do you think that taxpayers should be on the hook for \$650 million on your Liberal seat-saver program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it's always good to remind the honourable member of some things some of his colleagues have said. The member from Halton, in this Legislature, said, "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them." The member from Haldimand-Norfolk wrote a letter to the Minister of Energy: "The potential for future alternate generation at Nanticoke to replace that slated for the proposed and disputed Clarkson plant should receive ample consideration." The Leader of the Opposition told the Globe and Mail on September 25, 2011: "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga." The member for Halton: "I was pleased when it was cancelled."

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Mr. Speaker, there's an equal list of quotations from the third party, the New Democratic Party. All parties of this House agreed that the Oakville and the Mississauga plants should not proceed.

Discussion took place at the committee, as we've gone over, and 36,000 pages of documents have been delivered to committee members.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the Premier: I'm pleased to see that you have, in fact, given your caucus the option to vote in favour of government transparency, and I'm sure that they will do the right thing. I'm confident that our caucus is united and we'll be voting in favour of this motion because we are concerned with your blatant disregard for government transparency and accountability.

Today's vote is a vote against political interference by the Liberal campaign team. Today's vote is a vote against the government's failed transparency. Today's vote is about sending this issue to committee to get to the bottom of yet another Liberal scandal.

Premier, why do you feel that holding the government to account on behalf of the hard-working people of Ontario is unjustified?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House are going to vote against this motion. We're going to vote against this motion because we do not agree with the vindictiveness of the opposition. We do not agree with the partisan and cynical approach that's put forward. Most of all, we do not agree with an attack upon an honourable member of this Legislature, the Minister of Energy.

We have come forward to the table over and over again with a way forward when it came to the documents, with compromise and co-operation. We also came forward several days ago with a way in which we could amend the motion in front of this Legislature so that the committee would be seized with very, very important matters related both to the gas plant and the balance of public interests. Mr. Speaker, this opposition would not even allow us to debate that motion. This opposition put a muzzle on this Legislature.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The government's decision to impose contracts on teachers is creating turmoil in our schools. In my riding and across Ontario, the government's scheme is hurting students as extracurricular sports, clubs, field trips and parents' nights are all cancelled or being delayed.

Why is the government planning to expand its already-failed strategy to other sectors when this government will only bring similar turmoil to hospitals, universities and day cares as well?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I am proud of the decisions that this government has made to keep dollars invested in our classrooms. The agreement that we reached with more than 55,000 teachers across the province, if fully implemented, will save this province \$2 billion and avert \$473 million that would need to be pulled out of our students' classrooms.

On this side of the House, we stand for the continued efforts to move forward with the gains that we've made: to keep our class sizes small, to keep our test scores growing, to keep our grad rates going. What we have asked from our partners in education is to take a pause when it comes to pay increases. I would urge the members opposite to join with us, to join with the Premier and I, who are asking teachers to raise their issues with us, continue with extracurriculars for our students and not put them in the middle of this debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, my question again is to the Premier. The government created a problem and now it's blaming the teachers for a problem they created.

Students should be able to focus on learning at schools, but this government has chosen to pursue a self-serving, hard-line scheme that has undermined peace in our schools and, more importantly, has ended up hurting students the most.

When we already know the government's scheme is creating turmoil in our schools, why is this Premier insisting on following the same broken approach, which will only hurt Ontarians who rely on hospitals, universities and daycare?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I am proud of the record of this government when it comes to support for the education system and particularly for our teachers. I'm proud that, on this side of the House, we've had platform after platform that has focused on what we can do to improve the education system, and that is in stark contrast to the third party, who had no education platform at all.

Each and every year we have sought to improve education, invest in our teachers, invest in our classrooms, to keep young teachers employed. If we were to take \$473 million out of our classrooms, we would see young teachers and support workers—10,000 of them—fired. That is not what we want.

Again, I urge the third party: Join with our government. Ask our teachers to be part of the solution, to keep our kids out of this and to allow extracurricular activities to continue right across the province.

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. We know that aboriginal youth under the age of 25 represent more than half of the aboriginal population in this province and that youth are often among the most vulnerable in our province. We also know that recreation is a powerful tool in supporting the development of life skills in youth and has been shown to lead to improved health, well-being and education levels.

In 2010, our government announced a partnership with Right to Play and developed the promoting life-skills in aboriginal youth program to help empower youth in First Nations communities on-reserve.

Can the minister update us on the progress of this program and the impact it has had on aboriginal youth across the province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Everyone in this House would agree that if aboriginal people—aboriginal youth—in this province are to have a bright future, the needs and challenges of aboriginal youth need to be addressed. So I think it's a wonderful thing that in 2010, the Honourable Brad Duguid and then, later on, the Honourable Chris Bentley, when they were Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs, invested in and supported the Right to Play program, and all of the private partners who are part of that.

The program is targeted at engaging and motivating young people through sport and play—uses sport and play as a tool to build confidence—but also the leadership skills that are developed as part of the Right To Play

program are absolutely portable and essential to young people going forward.

So far, our government has contributed \$1.5 million towards this program, and I recently announced that the province will be pledging an additional \$1 million a year for the next three years for the continuation and the expansion of PLAY.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Minister. To continue the progress, we believe it's important to keep an open dialogue with the aboriginal community, especially those that make up the younger generation. Aboriginal youth in this province often face unique challenges and can offer a unique perspective for decision-makers when looking into what we can do to help them prosper and succeed.

Speaker, through you to the minister, what are we doing to ensure that the work we are doing to support youth across the province actually responds to the unique needs of the youth living in First Nation communities on-reserve?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've seen how the PLAY program has worked, and that's why it's being expanded. There are now 39 First Nation communities and 1,000 aboriginal youth who are involved in the program. But it's necessary for us to continue to listen, particularly to young people, and hear what their concerns are.

For example, when I was in Kenora in the summer, I had the opportunity to meet with the Treaty 3 youth council, which is a group of bright, talented young people, and I was so impressed at their depth of knowledge and their concerns about the future of all of their communities.

One of their biggest concerns was education and the funding disparity between on-reserve education, which is funded by the federal government, and off-reserve education, which is funded by the provincial government, and the transition between the two, because most young aboriginal people have to come off-reserve and go into provincial schools. The basis that they're getting on-reserve is not what they need. They talked to me about the challenges they come across when they face post-secondary.

So we are listening. We are engaging with youth, and that is the way that we'll know how to move forward with that.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Minister of Health. On July 19, the estimates committee made a simple request of the minister. The committee asked her to provide, no later than August 29, all documents related to the Liberal scandal-plagued eHealth program from 2009 to 2012. For two months, the minister failed to respond to the committee's request, and she even ignored the clerk. But, finally, two months later, the committee got its response: No, they're legally sensitive and eHealth is way too busy not building a diabetes registry to find them.

I know the health minister thinks she has escaped the spotlight for now, but I have to ask: Is she willing to travel down the same path as her leadership rival, the energy minister, or has she learned from the past few days that you can't escape the will of this House?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to answer this question, and let me read from the letter that was sent by myself to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates:

"The ministry is committed to full co-operation with the committee's requests. I assure you that we respect the authority of the Standing Committee on Estimates to call for information in its course of work."

The letter goes on, and I believe the member opposite was sent a copy of this letter, so he knows of what I have written, but I will happily read it into the record:

"EHealth will respond to the committee directly. However, eHealth estimates that the time to retrieve and review all of the potentially responsive documents is 420 person-days. This is a time-consuming task. It requires the production of thousands of documents. We understand that it will not be possible to complete such an extensive search and review in the short time frame that has been provided."

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): At this moment—I thank you for your indulgence—I'd like to welcome and introduce, in the Speaker's gallery, former MPP Phil Gillies from Brantford, in the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments.

The Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the motion by Mr. Leone arising from the Speaker's ruling of September 13, 2012.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have unanimous consent to put the motion forward? I heard a no.

The member from Timmins-James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, under standing order 28(f), I just want to give notice to the House that, unfortunately, Mr. Bradley cannot be here today because he's in the hospital with a hernia, and we are declaring that we will pair with Mr. Bradley, in fairness.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for that point of order.

Just before I deal with deferred votes, there was some concern about a few things that were said today in the House. I confess that I did not hear some of them as a result of what was happening in this House. At any time—and I repeat myself—at any time, if a member feels that they may have said something that they should not have said or have said something unparliamentary in the heat of the moment, it's always a point of order for them to correct the record and withdraw. Thank you.

DEFERRED VOTES

HEALTHY HOMES RENOVATION
TAX CREDIT ACT, 2012LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT
POUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU LOGEMENT
AXÉ SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit / Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts en vue de mettre en œuvre le crédit d'impôt pour l'aménagement du logement axé sur le bien-être.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1149.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members take their seats, please.

On May 9, 2012, Mr. Bradley moved third reading of Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Fife, Catherine	Milloy, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Bartolucci, Rick	Forster, Cindy	Murray, Glen R.
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras
Best, Margaret	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Piruzza, Teresa
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Campbell, Sarah	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Coteau, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Crack, Grant	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Taylor, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Vanthof, John
Dhillon, Vic	McGuinty, Dalton	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Elliott, Christine	McDonnell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hillier, Randy	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 68; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We now have a deferred vote on Mr. Leone's motion from the Speaker's ruling of September 13, 2012.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1153 to 1158.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members take their seats, please.

On September 25, 2012, Mr. Leone moved that this House directs the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to table immediately with the Clerk of the House all remaining documents ordered by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012; and

That the matter of the Speaker's finding of a prima facie case of privilege, with respect to the production of documents by the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to the Standing Committee on Estimates, be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which is hereby reconstituted as it existed on September 9, 2012; and

That the committee shall be authorized to meet at the call of the Chair and shall report back its findings and recommendations no later than November 19, 2012.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Amott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Campbell, Sarah	Leone, Rob	Schein, Jonah
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Jagmeet
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McDonnell, Jim	Tabuns, Peter
Fedeli, Victor	McKenna, Jane	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Thompson, Lisa M.
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Vanthof, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Milligan, Rob E.	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Natyshak, Taras	Yurek, Jeff
Horwath, Andrea	Nicholls, Rick	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil
Balkissoon, Bas	Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Milloy, John
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza

Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Broten, Laurel C.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Dei Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted

Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Qaadi, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Takharr, Harinder S.
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad

McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the motion, please rise.

Nays

Amott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 53; the nays are 50.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wish to advise the House, pursuant to standing order 28(f), that the members for St. Catharines and Timmins-James Bay were paired for this vote.

The ayes being 53, the nays being 50, I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1203 to 1208.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members take their seats, please.

On April 26, 2012, Ms. Matthews moved second reading of Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bisson, Gilles
Broten, Laurel C.
Campbell, Sarah
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Dei Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob

Duncan, Dwight
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill

Miller, Paul
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Oraziotti, David
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadi, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takharr, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WORLD HABITAT DAY

Mr. Steve Clark: It's an honour to rise this week as we celebrate World Habitat Day 2012, a day to recognize the desperate need for adequate shelter. Even 27 years after the United Nations proclaimed the first Monday in October as World Habitat Day, the need is greater than ever. Sadly, this is not only the case in faraway countries. The lack of adequate housing is something that 1.5 million families in Canada struggle with daily.

The theme of this year's World Habitat Day—Many Homes, One Community—reminds us that the surest

path to healthy communities and a strong economy is to build more homes. It's not a complicated concept because we know a safe and secure home is the cornerstone for a successful life. For a child, home is the foundation to success at school and a lifetime of opportunity. For an adult, it unlocks the door to employment and the stability of meaningful work.

As we recognize we have much more to do, I want to acknowledge Habitat for Humanity, one organization truly making a difference. Its 50,000 outstanding volunteers are changing lives because they don't talk about the problem, they roll up their sleeves and build homes to solve it.

In Canada alone, over the past 25 years, they've provided homes for more than 2,000 low-income families. That's thousands of lives turned around through the dream of home ownership. I've seen this happen in my own riding of Leeds-Grenville, where Habitat for Humanity Thousand Islands will celebrate the completion of a three-townhouse project in Prescott this month.

At this time, I urge everyone to follow Habitat for Humanity's lead and commit to become part of the solution.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to talk today about the community start-up and maintenance benefit. On January 1, 2013, the benefit, relied upon in urgent situations in Ontario by the most vulnerable—preventing homelessness—will be gutted. The sudden halting of the community start-up fund for those forced on to social assistance due to unemployment or disability has been done so quickly that Ontario's municipalities have no time to plan a strategy to deal with the increased pressures of homelessness.

Slow economic recovery has highly impacted municipalities like Niagara, which has resulted in increased workloads for social services departments across this province. The already underfunded homelessness program will not be able to address the new pressures created by those cuts—and those cuts are 52% in the region of Niagara.

The loss of these benefits will, in turn, put more pressures on other services in local communities like shelters, transition houses, hospitals, food banks and social housing providers. More troubling, these cuts are being made prior to the release of the final report on the social assistance review. The cuts undermine the important review process and any reform that arises from that review.

The Minister of Community and Social Services needs to visit municipalities like Niagara and others in this province to see first-hand the impact that these cuts will have on communities.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Mario Sergio: The new rail link between Pearson International Airport and Union Station is off to a good

start. By 2015, the rail line is going to be in place in time for the Pan Am and Parapan American Games.

The air-rail link will operate across a 25-kilometre route, with an extension already under way connecting the Kitchener line to Toronto Pearson International Airport. This extension is creating and supporting some 1,200 jobs, will remove some 1.2 million car trips from our roads in the first year alone, and will ease congestion and contribute to cleaner air.

Speaker, 25 kilometres in 25 minutes: This is the travel time between Union Station and Pearson International Airport. It's part of Helping Ontario Moving. Our commitment of investing \$35 billion in infrastructure will help communities in the GTA to create jobs and remain strong. It is vital to keep the economy moving, to offer and support investing in our infrastructure and to create jobs for our families today and a strong economy in the future.

I thank you, Speaker, for your time.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

Mr. John Yakabuski: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature today and talk a little bit about our pages and the page program. Today, of course, I'm thanking the pages who will be leaving at the end of this week.

It's a wonderful program that approximately 140 grade 7 and 8 boys and girls from across the province of Ontario participate in each year. It's a unique experience where they have an opportunity to meet other students from across the province and learn first-hand about the Ontario Parliament and the legislative process.

They provide many helpful duties for us as members of provincial Parliament and officers of the House, and it's a great experience for them as well. In fact, pages go on to make other significant contributions. As we know, currently there are two members of the Legislature—the government House leader, Mr. Milloy, and the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Mr. McNaughton—who served here as pages in the past.

I've had 13 pages since I've been a member here: Conor Kyte, Emma Dobson, Loreena Dobson, Morgan Brodofske, Joe Kyte, Daniel Muzzi, Sean Kyte, Vanessa Van Decker, Giselle Groskleg, Chloé St. Amand, Bernadette McCann, Abigail Groskleg, and today, Patrick Kyte.

I want to talk a little bit about Patrick Kyte. I don't know for sure if this is historical, but I believe it is. The Kyte family, who Patrick is the youngest boy of—currently, he's now the fourth member of that family to serve as a legislative page in this House, and I do believe that is the first time in history that has happened.

I've had a great opportunity to learn things myself from the 13 pages I've had, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the pages, past and present, who have served this House. I thank them for their services, and a particular thanks to Patrick Kyte and his brothers, who I believe have made history.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I offered my indulgence because it was the pages, because I like them.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: The Northlander left Union Station at 8:40 a.m. Just out of the station, we saw empty factories and the ever-looming construction cranes for more office buildings and condos. They soon gave way to tree-lined suburbs, then farm fields and the occasional tractor doing fall tillage. The fields became smaller as we came closer to the Canadian Shield. The fall reds and yellows and the blue waters were brilliant. Washago, Gravenhurst, Bracebridge, Huntsville are destinations that don't immediately come to mind when you think of the Ontario Northland.

In the North Bay rail yards, we met long freight trains heading south, cars loaded with lumber from Tembec, newsprint from Resolute and strand board from Georgia Pacific. Then through Temagami, an area unrivalled in the province for its natural beauty; Cobalt, a town famous for its silver, which was discovered through the construction of the railway.

Next the Little Claybelt, past large farms and grain elevators equal to any in the province; through Englehart, home of the 701 and the Georgia Pacific mill; more forest, then the greater clay belt, through fields of grazing cattle around Matheson.

The sun went down as we entered the boreal forest, and at 8:45 p.m., we arrived at our last stop, Cochrane, home base for Canada's largest gold mine, Detour Lake and Tim Horton's hometown.

At every stop, people were waving, some crying, not believing that this day had come. A ride on the Northlander is a lesson in Ontario's past and present, but sadly, not its future. The ONTC was commissioned by leaders who knew how to build and unite the province. It is being torn apart by a government that seems intent on dividing the north from the south.

CARIBOU CHARITY RIDE

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, on Sunday, September 9 of this year, the fourth annual Caribou Charity Ride took place, and I, along with 400 other cyclists, was pleased to participate in this fundraiser for the Northern Cancer Fund. Cyclists could choose between a 50K or a 100K bike ride that began at the Nor'Wester Hotel and coursed its way through beautiful Oliver Paipoonge.

1510

This year's ride raised over \$38,000 for the Northern Cancer Fund, the money going towards research and equipment, and 100% of the money staying in north-western Ontario.

I want to thank all of the volunteers who put in countless hours to make this year's ride such a success. I know they are hard at work already preparing for next year's Caribou Charity Ride.

During our lifetimes, nearly everyone will be directly or indirectly affected by cancer. This Caribou Charity Ride was created to give all people—mothers, fathers, grandparents, teens, friends and cancer survivors—the motivation to challenge themselves while contributing to finding a cure. This event inspires a healthy lifestyle, while promoting cancer awareness and hopefully empowering those affected by the disease.

Speaker, again, I thank the people of Thunder Bay and surrounding communities for once again supporting a very worthwhile cause, while combining exercise, enthusiasm and volunteerism to empower and enrich the lives of so many of our friends, families and our neighbours.

JOSH NELSON

Mr. Rob Leone: I rise today to speak of a courageous young man by the name of Josh Nelson, of Cambridge.

On June 20, 2003, at the age of nine, Josh was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour. After enduring a 10-hour surgery, seizures, a stroke, a post-surgery syndrome that left him unable to walk or talk, 31 radiation treatments and 52 weeks of chemotherapy, it became clear that Josh was a fighter.

It took years for Josh to regain his mobility, and although his surgery has left him in a wheelchair, he does not consider himself to be handicapped. To quote Josh, "I don't like it when people label me as 'handicapped' because the definition of the word handicapped is 'something that puts someone at a disadvantage by a physical or mental defect.' That definition may describe what people see at first glance, but I am so much more than that. I can make my disadvantage my advantage and my disability my ability. So I tell people that I am handicapped instead."

Josh is now a nine-year cancer survivor. He has not taken this title lightly. He has been invited by several community groups to share his story of hope and inspiration and has participated in many community events to help support a cause that's close to his heart.

In 2010, Josh rode a tandem bike across Ontario with the Sears National Kids Cancer Ride and raised over \$20,000. In 2011, he set his sights higher and did the same thing across Canada, raising over \$85,000.

On September 13, I was pleased to present Josh with one of 14 Diamond Jubilee Awards. He earned his award.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Speaker, 2012 marks significant milestones for the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. September 24 marked 36 years as a republic and is observed by a public holiday on the twin islands annually. On August 31, 2012, the nationals of Trinidad and Tobago celebrated a golden anniversary: 50 years of independence from colonial rule. On Sunday, September 23, the Church of the Nativity in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River held a special service and a narrated cultural show on the history and growth of the island's arts,

culture, music and the world-famous Carnival festival, to recognize these milestones.

The twin islands are known worldwide for the origin of the Carnival festival, steel pan music and calypso. Over the last 50 years, there have been many achievements, the most recent being that the nation is the western hemisphere's largest supplier of liquefied natural gas and one of the Caribbean's largest and most industrialized economies. The European Union Council on Tourism and Trade has awarded the nation the best tourist destination for 2012.

Mr. Speaker, as a native from Trinidad and Tobago, I am proud of its accomplishments and would like to wish every national of Trinidad and Tobago a happy 50th anniversary.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: One year, one month and one day ago, on September 1, 2011, the then Minister of the Environment announced the proposed Highland Companies quarry application in my riding of Dufferin-Caledon would be obliged to hold an environmental assessment.

On November 29 of last year, I questioned Premier McGuinty about the EA for the proposed quarry. I asked for assurances from the minister, Jim Bradley, that the public would be consulted on the terms of reference for the EA. The public and I are both still waiting for that consultation.

The Environmental Assessment Act requires the proponent to develop the terms of reference for an EA, but more importantly, the public must also be able to actively participate in crafting those terms of reference.

Dufferin-Caledon residents want to know why, after over a year, there has been no further action from the Ministry of the Environment. The ministry's promise to undertake an EA for the proposed 2,400-acre quarry garnered the attention of the entire province. The unfortunate part is that it seems to have only garnered the attention of this government during an election campaign.

Again, I am asking for the Minister of the Environment to follow through, something we have seen far too little of. We want the EA to begin so residents can have some assurance that this application will be reviewed through an environmental assessment process.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (HEALTHY DECISIONS MADE EASY), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SANTÉ (DÉCISIONS SANTÉ SIMPLIFIÉES)

Mme Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to enact the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, 2012 and to amend various statutes with respect to health matters / Projet de loi 126, Loi édictant la Loi de 2012 sur la prévention du cancer de la peau et modifiant diverses lois à l'égard de questions relatives à la santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have introduced a similar bill quite recently, but what I've done is I have rolled into one bill a few of the ideas that I had put forward. The first one is on healthy decisions for healthy eating, where the number of calories and sodium would be posted on the menu board in big restaurant chains. The second one is on the Ombudsman Act, where the Ombudsman would have oversight of a health facility. The third one is the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, which would regulate the use of tanning beds. The fourth one is on the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which would ban flavoured cigarillos and flavoured tobacco products, and prohibit the distribution of new tobacco products and smokeless tobacco products. I have rolled them all up into this new bill, and I hope it will move forward through this House.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present petitions from across Ontario. Just a few names: Derrick LeDrew from Kleinburg, as well as Derrick MacLean from Kleinburg, as well as Darren Martin from Cambridge. That's just one or two.

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis," for four or "five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore" older "vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

1520

I am pleased to sign it, support it and present it to Leo, one of the pages on their last couple of days here.

UTILITY TRANSPORTATION VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATV) is legal on schedule 2 highways in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas many residents of Ontario have switched to utility transportation vehicles (UTV); and

"Whereas the use of UTVs in schedule C of the Highway Traffic Act is allowed north of areas in far northern Ontario and unorganized territory; ...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario direct the Ministry of Transportation to enact legislation to allow the use of UTVs on class 2 highways throughout northern Ontario."

I fully agree and send the petition down with Zakhar.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It states:

"Whereas it is the right of every Canadian to vote once in each election for the candidate of his or her choice and have their vote fairly counted and not offset by faulty voter registration or any sort of illegal practices; and

"Whereas credible allegations of voting irregularities exist for the most recent election, including non-citizens voting, persons voting multiple times at various voting stations and errors on the permanent register of electors list; and

"Whereas the practice of 'vouching' has been practised in polling stations where it is not permitted, such as non-rural polling stations, and does not require verified proof of a person's age, citizenship and residence in a riding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 106, Prevention of Electoral Fraud Act, 2012, by Bas Balkissoon, the member from Scarborough-Rouge River, that would require that voters present proof of Canadian citizenship; require the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario to appoint an independent party to conduct a review of the permanent register of electors within six months after the bill passes and subsequently every five years; allow scrutineers to monitor the process by which voters add their names to the voters list on election day; and forbid vouching, which currently excludes the requirement for legitimate identification."

I fully support this petition and give it to Parnika.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the price of gas is reaching historic price levels and is expected to increase another 15% in the near future, yet oil prices are dropping; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has done nothing to protect consumers from high gas prices; and

"Whereas the high and unstable gas prices across Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship to Ontario drivers while also impacting the Ontario economy in key sectors such as tourism and transportation; and

"Whereas the high price of gas has a detrimental impact on all aspects of our already troubled economy and substantially increases the price of delivered commodities, adding further burden to Ontario consumers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and urge the Premier to take action to protect consumers from the burden of high gas prices in Ontario."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Mathilde.

MINING INDUSTRY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Sudbury and Nickel Belt:

"Whereas there has not been an inquiry into mining practices in Ontario for 30 years;

"Whereas there were eight deaths in Ontario mining properties since January 2011;

"Whereas mining technology has significantly changed how mines operate in Ontario;

"Whereas ownership of the mining sector has become international;

"Whereas environmental issues have been identified in workplace diseases in community health from mining operations;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commission an inquiry into the state of mining in Ontario and into the Ministry of Labour's enforcement of the Ontario Health and Safety Act and regulation 854, that is the regulation for mining. Such an inquiry will reinforce best practices and identify issues for improvement."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Jasper to bring it to the Clerk.

RADIATION SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas subsection 6(2)8 of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act identifies dental hygienists as persons deemed to be qualified to operate an X-ray machine; and

"Whereas dental hygienists in independent practice need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

"We, the dental hygienists in independent practice, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by the member from Richmond Hill that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Jenna.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints into the areas of hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate any of these areas; and

"Whereas people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities."

I will affix my name to this petition and I will give it to page Ethan.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: I have a petition here, hand-delivered to me, from the good people from Washago.

"Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north's economy; and

"Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

"Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the planned cancellation of the Northlander"—I guess "the cancellation" of the Northlander—"and the sale of the rest of the assets at the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately."

I fully agree, sign my signature and give it once again to page—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Richmond Hill.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have petitions today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are risks inherent in the use of ionizing, magnetic and other radiations in medical diagnostic and radiation therapy procedures; and

"Whereas the main piece of legislation governing these activities, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (HARPA), dates from the 1980s; and

"Whereas neither the legislation nor the regulations established under the act have kept pace with the explosion in imaging examinations, including image-guided procedures used in cardiology, radiation therapy, ultrasound, orthopaedics etc.;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish, as soon as possible, a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act to bring it up to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and covers all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I fully agree with these petitions. I sign them and pass them on to page Sydney.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas supported-living residents in southwestern and eastern Ontario were subjected to picketing outside their homes during labour strikes in 2007 and 2009; and

"Whereas residents and neighbours had to endure megaphones, picket lines, portable bathrooms and shining lights at all hours of the day and night on their streets; and

"Whereas individuals with intellectual disabilities and the organizations who support them fought for years to break down barriers and live in inclusive communities; and

"Whereas Bill 23 passed first reading in the Ontario Legislature on December 6, 2011;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly vote in support of Sylvia Jones's Bill 23—the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act."

I of course support the petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Jasper to take to the table.

1530

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas servers and bartenders in Ontario earn \$8.90 an hour, far less than the minimum wage"—excuse me, I ran up the stairs;

"Whereas tips are given to servers and bartenders for good service and to supplement the lower wages they receive; and

"Whereas Ontario law allows for owners and managers to pocket a portion of servers' and bartenders' earned tips or total sales; and

"Whereas thousands of servers across the province have asked for this practice to stop;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the swift passage of Bill 107, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act with respect to tips and other gratuities and thereby end the practice of 'tip-outs' to management and owners."

I agree and would affix my signature thereto and give it to page Parnika.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a petition concerning the prevention of electoral fraud in Ontario.

"Whereas it is the right of every Canadian to vote once in each election for the candidate of his or her choice and have their vote fairly counted and not offset by faulty voter registration or any sort of illegal practices; and

"Whereas credible allegations of voting irregularities exist for the most recent election, including non-citizens voting, persons voting multiple times at various voting stations and errors on the permanent register of electors list; and

"Whereas the practice of 'vouching' has been practised in polling stations where it is not permitted, such as non-rural polling stations, and does not require verified proof of a person's age, citizenship and residence in a riding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 106, Prevention of Electoral Fraud Act, 2012, by Bas Balkissoon, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, that would require that voters present proof of Canadian citizenship; require the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario to appoint an independent party to conduct a review of the permanent register of electors within six months after the bill passes and subsequently every five years; allow scrutineers to monitor the process by which voters add their names to the voters list on election day; and forbid vouching, which currently excludes the requirement for legitimate identification."

I support this petition. I will add my name and hand it to Patrick.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's plan to cut more than \$1 billion in medical funding will impact my doctor's ability to provide care for me and my family, and is a serious risk to health care in our community and across the province,

"We," the 250 undersigned, "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Reverse the recent unilateral cuts to medical funding, and negotiate in good faith with doctors for an agreement that will protect Ontario health care."

I agree. I will sign this petition and give it to page Katherine.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt—actually, mainly from the people of Hanmer in my riding—and it reads as follows:

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most" valuable—that's "vulnerable"—"seniors." They're very valuable also.

I support this petition and will give it to Roberto to bring to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SYSTEM
OPERATOR ACT, 2012LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ
D'EXPLOITATION DU RÉSEAU
D'ÉLECTRICITÉ DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 19, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts/ *Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité pour fusionner la Société indépendante d'exploitation du réseau d'électricité et l'Office de l'électricité de l'Ontario, modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 75. This act aims to change the Electricity Act to allow for the merger of the Independent Electricity System Operator, IESO, and the Ontario Power Authority, OPA. We do not believe the OPA should be merged; we want it abolished. We want to eliminate the waste and bureaucracy. We want to save taxpayers' money. The OPA is synonymous with big bureaucracy, higher hydro bills, waste and mismanagement. No tinkering with amalgamation will ensure energy security or protection against increasingly unmanageable costs.

It actually brings me to another very similar bureaucracy that's wasteful, and that's the LHINs. Again, they want to tinker around the edges. They don't want to make fundamental change to actually improve the delivery of services to Ontario residents. Due to the dire fiscal position the Liberal government has placed our great province in, we need real change. It is time for a strategic energy plan, as opposed to the costly experiment—that being the Green Energy Act—that has been thrust upon the people of Ontario by the current Liberal government.

Facts: Seven years ago, the OPA was formed as a 15-person transitional body tasked with managing Ontario's energy supplies. Today, it's a mega-bureaucracy responsible for failed energy plans. It is big bureaucracy. Today the OPA is a mega-bureaucracy, 235 people strong; a third of the people make over \$100,000 a year, and the CEO rakes in about \$600,000-plus a year—unheard of. Furthermore, its expenses have risen from \$14 million in 2005 to almost \$80 million today. I would ask: Truly, what value are we getting out of that \$80-million expense?

We'll move on to hydro bills. Ontarians pay some of the highest electricity rates in the country, even though Ontario suffers from a problem rare in the world: a surplus of electrical energy. Aegent Energy Advisors estimate that a household with a \$110 monthly hydro bill will see a 58% increase over the next five years. This is going to amount to a \$768 yearly increase by 2016. Our suggestion is, we eliminate it and give the realized savings to the taxpayers via hydro bills, or, at the very least, pay down the enormous debt, a debt that has been doubled under this government's administration.

Management and waste: The Auditor General said that we lost \$1.8 billion exporting surplus power to Quebec and the United States in the past year. I would suggest

it's worse than that, because we're actually paying them to take our surplus power. Furthermore, the surplus also costs us when it forces nuclear shutdowns, like the one at Pickering's Unit 6 in early September that was off-line for two days, at an estimated cost of \$1.5 million.

It gets worse. Because of this real push to go to renewable energy in the form of wind power and solar—both of which, I might add, are intermittent power supplies that they cannot guarantee—they have to have the backup systems ready to roll. You have to have the nuclear, and you have to have the gas plant still running in the background, just for those times of potential peak. It's hard to fathom, Speaker.

There are a number of issues that I have to share with the House today, and with those people watching at home. The rural backlash against industrial wind turbines—health, democracy at stake. In my riding alone, 5,300 people have signed one petition, just to stop wind turbines on the Bruce Peninsula. I'll be presenting that petition here to the House in the next couple of days, Speaker. It's unfathomable that they want to put 270 of these on the beautiful Bruce Peninsula, arguably—certainly, I'm a little bit biased—one of the most beautiful, natural, pristine areas of our great province and our great country. They want to put these things up. And again, at what cost? What's the real value to them?

There are lawsuits already being faced. We spent four and a half days in here talking about a lawsuit and how much it's going to cost the government in regard to gas plants. In this case, Trillium Power Wind Corp. is in court suing the province for \$2.25 billion—billion dollars, Speaker—for four offshore wind projects derailed by a moratorium the government imposed in February 2011 on offshore developments. Interesting. Those four developments, in urban areas, were cancelled; however, the Liberals will not even entertain a moratorium for rural Ontario. It's hypocritical. They move gas plants after listening to the people in Oakville and Mississauga, but the people of rural Ontario have been screaming at the top of their lungs. My colleague from Prince Edward county, my colleague from Huron-Bruce and the leader of our party, Tim Hudak, have all placed bills in front of this Legislature saying, "Just slow down. Put a moratorium."

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The federal government just came out with a health study, and they still won't entertain that, even though potentially there are risks to the people of Ontario.

It's hard to imagine that they can do this and justify \$2.25 billion. Just think of the things we're not going to be able to get. I have the Markdale hospital in my riding. They came to the table after raising \$13 million locally for their new hospital. The current hospital is crumbling around them. They come to the Minister of Health, and she says, "I'm sorry, but we have no money." How can they say that and then waste this type of money? Over \$1 billion—and that figure's probably going to be low—was wasted on the mothballed Mississauga and Oakville gas plants.

We've had a lot of discussion here in the last couple of days about this. It's just unfathomable how the government on the opposite side can stand up and say how well they're doing and how great this is for our province. They actually slapped themselves on the back for a \$40-million deal. It's not their money. If they were going to pay this money back—a different story—we'd be having a totally different conversation, but this is just getting out of hand.

Excessive subsidies are just the order of the day: \$7 billion to Samsung alone; 20-year contracts that pay twice what it actually costs to produce electricity through the FIT program, and that's again being very conservative in our estimates. Some people are saying it's going to be two to three times more.

What about the false job promises? They promised 50,000 jobs. I'm going to ask them honestly to give us a number that's factual and actual, not this purported "20,000, and we're growing every day." We want to know, in black and white, with a report, where those jobs are and exactly how many people have actually created employment through this Green Energy Act.

Hydro rates are hurting families, businesses and investment. In my backyard, I have people coming every day. I have my mom, who's on a very fixed income. She can't fathom having to pay 58% more over the next few years for something that's as critical to her as her home heating and hydro bill. It's unfathomable. Yet today, we learn of \$750 million in Ornge that we've talked about. We've talked about \$650 million through the gas plants, which will probably end up being a billion. They keep going down the road with this untenable reality of more power, when we're actually paying the States and Quebec \$1 billion to take our surplus.

I toured in my backyard Chapman's Ice Cream. It's the biggest independent ice cream producer in the country—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Great ice cream.

Mr. Bill Walker: Great ice cream, as my colleague from Orangeville says.

They rely on hydro to power their business. They need it to heat a lot of their raw chemicals and their raw resources, and then they obviously need, once that ice cream is made into its great-tasting final product, to be able to freeze that. Just think of what a 58% increase might do to a business like that. Can they afford to continue with those types—would they even want to continue?

This is a great story. This business burned to the ground a few years ago. The owners, David and Penny Chapman, stood up and said, "You know what? We're going to guarantee every one of our workers a job, regardless of whether the factory's rebuilt on time. We're going to guarantee them they will not miss a paycheck." It's a great success story, and you know why, Speaker? Because they employ 600 people in a very small rural area, and they knew what would happen if that happened—to have to leave our community.

But these rates—they cannot go without hydro. They have to have hydro. A 58% increase: Just think of your home budget—if it was to increase 58% every year, if you could truly afford to manage that. It scares me to think of the jobs that may be lost if this government keeps going the way they are.

I don't want to sound like a broken record. I'm just trying to put out the facts so people can really make a sound judgment of their own. But there's growing skepticism over the Green Energy Act. The Society of Professional Engineers gives it a thumbs-down. That should tell you something—to quote—"the erratic nature of renewable power generation, as wind turbines generate electricity only when the wind is blowing and solar facilities when the sun is shining."

I know they take a lot of credit for a lot of things, and Premier Dad thinks he controls everything, but I don't think he's got the market on the sun and wind yet—a lot of hot air at times, but not the sun and the wind, Speaker.

As a result, the Ontario power grid is forced to keep other generators, as I've referenced—nuclear, gas plants—in operation, primarily there just in case we need them. We're paying for that just-in-case power. We've got a surplus. We're actually letting water flow over the falls in Niagara Falls—2 cents a kilowatt—but we don't utilize that. We go and pay 15 cents, or in the case of solar, 62 to 80 cents, depending on when the agreements were signed. It's absolutely ludicrous.

I'm not a bean-counter, but I think I can see the math here, and it's not very good. It's no wonder we're in the deficit situation of \$15.3 billion that we are, Speaker.

Despite this, the OPA and the Liberal government are forging ahead with their plan to dump an additional 10,700 megawatts of renewables into the grid by 2018. I look at these young pages in front of me and think, what are we setting up for them? We're going down a road, regardless of need, because we said we would do something, even if it's costing the taxpayers of Ontario billions of dollars that they can't afford and don't have. What's going to happen down the road?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's a pleasure to comment on the remarks made by the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I disagree with him on many issues, but there's one that I fully agree with: Chapman's makes fantastic ice cream. They use 100% Canadian milk, and you know what? This is Agriculture Week, and companies like Chapman's should be saluted because they use fantastic local product and make a fantastic ice cream. And that's where our similarities are going to stop.

Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, is going to combine the IESO and OPA. On that point of the bill, I think we could be in agreement, because we believe that—we actually would like to go farther. We believe combining agencies, especially agencies that buy electricity and that regulate electricity, would make

sense. It should lead to less duplication. It should lead to less problems like we've been having.

On the whole, that part of the bill makes sense, but there's another part of the bill that doesn't make sense, Speaker. That part of the bill removes even more public scrutiny from the electrical system, because now an electrical plan has to be submitted to the OPA, and the public has a right, if they so choose, to comment on it. With Bill 75, that right will be removed because it will be a ministerial plan. We've just gone through a big debate about what happens when we have politics getting involved too much in electricity. There is a risk that that could become an even bigger problem with this bill. That part of this bill is just a non-starter. Removing public scrutiny is causing us huge problems in this province, and we have to stop.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to have two minutes to make some comments on the comments or the speech given by the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I wasn't sure that he was addressing the bill, Bill 75.

I think the member who just spoke before me made it clear that the bill amends the Electricity Act, 1998, by amalgamating the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority and by continuing them as the Ontario Electricity System Operator. It goes on to list other—which I think are good amendments.

At the end, the purpose of the bill I think is to save money. We know that, in the past, when we do work intelligently and put a bill forward that does amalgamate or bring things together, we can save money. We proposed to implement a similar phased approach that successfully merged GO Transit and Metrolinx, and Infrastructure Ontario and the Ontario Realty Corporation. Those mergers were a successful initiative to save taxpayers' money and provided better services to Ontarians.

Furthermore, we expect these savings to be up to \$25 million annually in administrative and other similar costs. We can cut out some of the administrative requirements when we have all these different electricity boards and agencies out there—so you amalgamate them to save money. As I said earlier, we've done it in transportation and in the realty corporation and Infrastructure Ontario.

I think we should stick to the bill. It's a good bill. It deserves to go to committee to be debated further. I think we have to take a little bit of the invective out of the conversation and the debate here today and focus and debate really what this bill is that we're dealing with today and what the purpose of the bill is and what we plan to achieve. I think the member should reply why he's being so invective about something that is so simple.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak on the comments made by my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I will match

his Chapman's ice cream with my Reid's Dairy ice cream and the castle that everybody sees when they're driving through Belleville on the 401 in eastern Ontario.

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I would like to address some of his comments, though, on the bill today. He did call it tinkering, I believe was the way he put it. Tinkering around the edges: That's not going to solve the problems in Ontario. That's what this bill does.

The member opposite just spoke of the money that's going to be saved. The money that's going to be saved by passing Bill 75 as it currently stands is \$25 million, while the government on the other side just blew 650 million taxpayer dollars away on political moves to relocate two gas plants for the sake of saving those Liberal seats in Mississauga, Etobicoke and Oakville. The \$25 million that's going to be saved if this bill goes through is a drop in the bucket to the \$650 million we've seen wasted by that government in their political decisions.

The member from northern Ontario who spoke on behalf of the NDP talked about the political interference that has been occurring. Sometimes you wonder who's actually calling the shots over on the other side of the floor. There's a minister who sits there sometimes in name and title only, but is he the guy who's actually making decisions? I think we've learned, because the Minister of Finance enlightened us during our estimates committee, that no, indeed, it's not the Minister of Energy who's making these important calls; it's the Liberal campaign team that's making these calls. We sit here and we debate these bills that are put forward by honourable members in this House on the government side when really I wonder how much power these ministers actually have when it comes to controlling what's very important to our province: our electricity grid.

There are a lot of questions that need to be answered before this bill goes ahead, too.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise and comment on the remarks made by the MPP for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and to comment on this bill as a whole. A lot has happened since this bill was first introduced. We have learned quite a lot. The fundamental problem with a significant part of this bill is the removal of the public's opportunity to comment on, to present witnesses to and to analyze the power plans of the government of the day.

Right now, the government is supposed to put together a power plan, take it to the Ontario Energy Board and allow it to be examined. That has not happened. If that approach had been in place, the plant in Oakville would never have gone forward. The plant in Mississauga would have been stopped. We would not have had to deal with the cleanup—and I think the figure's right, the \$680-million figure. That's what we're talking about. We're not talking about \$40 million, as big as a number as that is; we're talking about much larger numbers.

It is clear now from going through the documents, even though they are partial, even though they are

redacted, that this is a highly politicized process, that of power planning, that intervention happens apparently from the Premier's office down into the whole process. It is an entirely politicized event. The removal of public opportunity to scrutinize the plans—to analyze, to critique and perhaps give the government of the day a little of the wisdom of the people of this province is going to be excised. Getting rid of waste and duplication: no problem; let's do that. But removing public scrutiny: That is going to have to be taken out of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. And thanks to my colleagues from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Scarborough Southwest, Prince Edward–Hastings and Toronto–Danforth, and a special shout-out to my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane. He's a proud dairy farmer. I was reminded by our deputy critic of agriculture in our caucus meeting just recently that it's Agriculture Week. So thank you to our farmers. He told us to thank every farmer that we see, and I'm going to do that today.

I'm also pleased to take up the torch for the Chapman's versus Reid's ice cream wars. Bring it on, Mr. Smith from Prince Edward.

Mr. Todd Smith: Ice cream war.

Mr. Bill Walker: We will have an ice cream war, sir.

Interjection: We need a taste-testing.

Mr. Bill Walker: Exactly. Maybe we'll do that. So we can bring some fun and enlightenment to this.

Back to a more serious matter: A number of colleagues have talked about that oversight and public scrutiny in this bill. How could the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants have gotten to the point of being a \$650-million sinkhole, a wasteful sinkhole, if the OPA was doing their job? It was talked about a merger in savings. We're saying, "No, no, no. Don't merge. You want real savings? Get rid of that whole bureaucracy that's not adding an iota of value." He talked, I believe—my colleague opposite—of \$25 million. I believe the number is about \$80 million if we just wipe it out altogether, so why would we not do that? Why would we not just go and do the actual tough lifting and make the tough decisions? They want to talk tinkering. We are \$15.3 billion in the hole this year because of their tinkering mentality. We need to make significant change. We need to do the right things and show leadership and action.

This is a bureaucracy that has just ballooned. It was supposed to be transitional. It's now become another silo and an entitlement culture that they seem to promote, and we just can't afford it. The taxpayers of Ontario have had enough, Speaker. We have to get rid of things that are not providing value to the taxpayers of Ontario.

If they can allow something like this to happen with that oversight, that's just terrible. They should be embarrassed about it. We need to get rid of this bureaucracy and the layers of administration that provide absolutely nothing. We need to be spending dollars on true things

like health care and education that they so proudly talk about all the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Madame Gélinas assumes ballot item number 71 and Mr. Prue assumes ballot item number 67.

Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It is an honour to rise on behalf of Dufferin–Caledon residents and comment on the important issue of reforming Ontario's energy sector. I just wish there was something more substantial to comment on than what we are discussing here today.

The bill before us is Bill 75, which is titled An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, and to make complementary amendments to other Acts—quite the mouthful, Speaker.

Unfortunately, while this government seems to have broken its habit of catchy bill titles, it's certainly stuck to its ways of window-dressing legislation. I say that because this bill really doesn't do anything to help families and job creators reeling from skyrocketing hydro prices in Ontario.

This government has consistently manipulated the energy sector in our province time and time again for its own political needs, with dangerous results for Ontario families and taxpayers. All Bill 75 does is tiptoe around the edges of the convoluted fiasco that is the Ontario energy sector in 2012. In essence, this bill amends the Electricity Act to allow for the merger of the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority. This bill would therefore create a new super- or mega-agency as a result of the merger.

The Ministry of Energy claims that this merger will save money. It hasn't happened with any other merger we've seen. Speaker, considering that the Ontario Power Authority started out as a 15-person transitional body seven years ago and is now a 235-person permanent entity, let's just say I have my doubts that creating even bigger bureaucratic entities will lead to savings. In fact, Speaker, the OPA's expenses in 2005 were \$15 million. Today, that number has ballooned to \$76.4 million. Moreover, today over 80 people earn in excess of \$100,000 at the OPA, and its CEO earns a whopping \$570,000. And remember, this was set up as a transitional body.

The fact is, by boasting about grouping bureaucrats under one roof and creating one big mega-agency, this government has shown it doesn't get how badly mismanaged Ontario's energy sector truly is. More important, however, is the fact that Bill 75 also puts more power in the hands of the minister. If the proceedings this morning did anything, they proved that no one in this chamber is above the scrutiny of the Ontario public.

We've seen countless examples of how things end up when this government mixes its political agenda with a

lack of proper oversight: the Samsung deal, the Ornge scandal, the eHealth disaster, the power plant fiasco, and the list goes on and on.

But the real shame here is that, through it all, this government has shown absolutely zero regard for Ontario residents in its decisions. But then again, I suppose, why would they? As I've said before, it's the Liberal way: Someone else should have to pay.

1600

The last thing Ontarians need is more political interference from the minister, from the Premier and from the Liberal campaign team in Ontario's energy sector. Rather than enhance the power of the minister, what this government ought to be doing is enhancing the power and say of local residents.

But as we all know, this government has shown a remarkable contempt for local municipalities when it comes to the energy sector. All of my colleagues know what I'm referring to. It is, of course, the government's heavy-handed approach—to borrow the phrase from the Premier—to the green energy projects. This approach removed all municipal planning powers with regard to the development of renewable energy generation.

Speaker, the municipality is the expected avenue for residents to voice concerns with zoning and rezoning issues. When you take away the power of municipalities to heed their citizens' will, you are essentially eliminating the ability of local residents to plan their communities. So now we have communities that have been forced to accept wind and solar farms, regardless of whether they wanted them or not.

What I'm trying to illustrate here is that rather than create another mega-agency that will undoubtedly function in a culture of heavy-handed secrecy, just like its predecessors, we should first and foremost be respecting the will of local councils and representatives. But alas, this government has stubbornly pursued its green energy experiment, and Ontario hydro ratepayers have footed the bill.

The issue is, now the Minister of Energy sets up and introduces Bill 75 by creating this new mega-agency. While I am definitely a fan of trimming excessive bureaucracy, the problem for Ontarians isn't the acronym that describes a government body. The problem for Ontarians is the cost of their hydro bill, plain and simple. So while the party opposite may holler and shout and call Bill 75 essential and utterly important and all the rest, the cold, hard truth is that they're spinning a \$25-million savings while they willingly throw away \$650 million, and all these costs will eventually find their way onto our Ontario residents' hydro bills.

You see, Speaker, these countless wind farms are paid some of the highest subsidies in the world to generate power the province has not needed. This is because the Liberals granted wind and solar producers guaranteed access to the grid. They guaranteed that whenever wind is produced, it will be bought and placed on the grid, whether we need it or not. The problem is, to accept the energy, which can often come at times when we don't

need it, like at night, the government stops making some of our traditional energy or produces surplus power. Consequently, we must then pay the US and Quebec hundreds of millions of dollars to take our excess power. All of these costs get passed on to the ratepayer, and so we see skyrocketing hydro costs that force companies to close or move.

This past weekend, I was at the Orangeville home show in my riding of Dufferin—Caledon. I love the home shows as an opportunity to highlight local businesses and a chance for them to promote their goods. But it also affords me an opportunity to see what people are concerned about and are talking about, and it's a great way to connect with consumers and residents.

You know what I heard when it came to hydro? Let me start by saying what I didn't hear. I didn't hear residents say, "Sylvia, you and the PC caucus absolutely have to support Bill 75." I didn't hear, "Sylvia, the number one issue in my mind is the creation of the OESO to replace the OPA and the IESO." No, Speaker, what I heard was, "How does the Premier think I can afford a 40% increase in my hydro bills?" What I heard was, "Why is the Minister of Energy taking orders from the Liberal campaign team?" What I heard was, "Why was \$650 million of taxpayers' money spent on saving Liberal seats?"

That's the problem: Bill 75 won't do anything to help Ontarians who simply want relief on their hydro bills. It won't do anything to help municipalities that have been effectively cut out of planning of their own communities. In my riding of Dufferin—Caledon, the municipalities of Mulmur, Mono, Melancthon and East Luther Grand Valley have all passed resolutions at council, demanding that their right to plan their own community be respected by this government. Sadly, their calls have gone unanswered. That's why Bill 75 is typical of this Liberal government's approach, because it skirts the real problems in Ontario's electricity sector in favour of the quick, seemingly marketable fix. Bill 75 fails to address the real concerns Ontario families and Ontario businesses have with the province's energy sector, and for that reason I will not be supporting it.

In closing, I would just like to note that when the Auditor General says we've lost \$1.8 billion exporting surplus power to Quebec and the US and that within three years' time Ontario will have the highest energy rates in North America, I think we need solutions that are bolder than a bureaucratic reshuffle.

I think what we need to do is go back to the drawing board and start figuring out why OPA was put there in the first place. If it was a transitional body when it was set up with 16 staffers, then (a) why does it still exist, and (b) why can't we move forward and actually start solving the energy issues—and there are a myriad of them in Ontario—and deal with the issues, instead of window-dressing with Bill 75, which will do absolutely nothing to give any kind of relief or comfort to the business owners and to the homeowners who are trying to pay their hydro bills right now?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to add my comments to Bill 75, Ontario Electricity System Operator Act.

On the one hand, this bill can be understood to be a small step towards consolidating the hydro planning functions that were scattered between different hydro agencies with the breakup of Ontario Hydro 12 years ago. Further, it also removes some of the waste in the system due to overlapping responsibilities.

On the other hand, while the integrated power system plan's long-term energy planning process was far from perfect, it did provide a much more formal guarantee of stakeholder and public participation in the planning process. The process of eliminating the real public accountability from a portfolio that is crippled by the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in backroom deals is highly problematic and, even more to the point, undemocratic.

Changes must be made to this bill to preserve public scrutiny over public dollars. I don't know a single Ontarian who believes that we should be entitled to spend their hard-earned tax dollars while we silence their input. Tax dollars are not meant to be used like our own personal ATMs. The government has a responsibility to propose fiscally sound strategies and solutions that will make life more affordable for the people of Ontario, yet here we are, my caucus and I, asking again and again for this government to show the people of Ontario the respect they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and speak on Bill 75 and in response to the member from Dufferin—Caledon, who spoke about this bill—she spoke about everything, actually, except the bill, but she spoke about mismanagement of the electricity system.

I would like just to remind her about her party's history when it comes to the electricity sector in this province. I would like to just remind the member from Dufferin—Caledon that when her party was in office, just on the nuclear side, they mismanaged the nuclear power stations where the regulators shut down two of three reactors. When they were in office, the supply of electricity came down by 6%, while the demand increased by 8%. And when they were in office, they imported electricity from the United States. When they were in office, they purchased electricity at \$2.43 per kilowatt hour and they sold it for 4.3 cents to the consumers. They created a stranded debt when they were in office. They started burning coal—actually, burning coal, when your party was in office, increased by 128%. So this is the background of your party when you were in office.

When it came to management of the electricity system, the party opposite started by privatizing Ontario Hydro at that time, and when the privatization failed, they broke down Ontario Hydro into six corporations and they deregulated the price of electricity. When deregulation

didn't work, they brought back, again, regulations, and that also increased the stranded debt.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Given what's been happening with the current contempt discussions, to me, talking about Bill 75 presents an opportunity to talk about how very bad this bill is. It strips a great deal of information that is public now and only seems to enhance the culture of secrecy that this government is becoming famous for.

The legislation is merely a \$25-million excuse to put more power in the hands of the minister and put him and his secret agency above scrutiny. We all know how that has played out, first of all with regards to the Samsung deal, followed by Ornge, and now we find ourselves in the same position when it comes to learning—still trying to learn—the true costs of the Oakville and Mississauga power plant closures.

The documents show that the OPA clearly takes its marching orders from the minister's office and from the Premier's office. There is absolutely no final decision that would ever come out of the OPA that does not have political input, if you will, from both the Premier's office and the minister's office. Then the documents have further shown us that they are told to hint that this is their own decision, without any political interference. Those documents will bear that out.

This Bill 75—all it does is consolidate even more power in the hands of the minister, promote the culture of secrecy this government is known for and allow for even further political interference in the technical decisions and the fundamentals that should be driving energy policy in Ontario. It does nothing to help the 600,000 men and women who woke up today without a job.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kenora—Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to stand up and join some of the discussion on the member from Dufferin—Caledon's comments on this particular bill. I agree with her when she says that we really need more than a bureaucratic shuffle. Nothing, in my mind, could be more true. We have too many bureaucracies in our energy system right now, and they are just far too costly. I know I've previously stood up and said that of our seven or eight energy bureaucracies we have in Ontario, we're spending about \$14 million on just the top executive salaries. There's a way that we can trim a bunch of money right out of the system.

I agree with her that this bill, Bill 75, won't do anything to help people who are struggling to pay their hydro bills. I know a couple of years ago in Kenora—Rainy River, we had a number of people who came out on a very cold and blustery winter day—and I should say that the people in northwestern Ontario are generally very positive; they generally don't like to really cause a fuss, but they had just completely had it. Their hydro bills are through the roof. So many people, despite working full-time jobs, just aren't able to make ends meet. They

weren't able to pay their bills. So people came out in droves—and I swear, it must have been the coldest day of the year—to express their frustration.

I think we really need to respect where they're coming from, and we need to do something to really address these skyrocketing costs. This bill sadly doesn't do any of that. I had high hopes coming to this Legislature. I thought we could have an opportunity to really make some changes that would fundamentally help people. This bill falls drastically short.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Dufferin—Caledon has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I appreciate the feedback from the members from London—Fanshawe, Richmond Hill, Nipissing and Kenora—Rainy River.

As I was looking over this legislation—of course, if you are merging two, then we are going to have to deal with severance costs and severance issues. I was reminded of a smaller experience that we had—

Interjection.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You're getting ahead of me, there—with finance staff, who earned \$45,000 a year. They were severed, given a buyout package, and the next day they were back on the job with the federal government. Of course, they were earning \$45,000 a year.

At this OPA, there are 87 people earning over \$100,000 a year. The severance costs are going to be substantial, and for what gain? I have not heard anyone on the other side of the House explain to me where that gain is going to happen. I see a merger. I see costs related to severance. I see more bureaucracy, and I do not see any opportunity that actually improves the lives of Ontario residents, who are already hurting and literally crying poor over their energy costs.

At my time at the home show this past weekend, it was without a doubt the number one issue. Energy is what people are talking about. At home shows, it used to all be about health care and gridlock. This weekend, I can tell you, people wanted to talk about energy. Why is it so costly? Why are they throwing away money? Why are they not actually doing anything that's going to assist people?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I am eager to speak to Bill 75, unfortunately not because I support it, but because it must be clearly stated how wrong this bill is. Bill 75 is yet another do-nothing, empty piece of legislation. It's another bill that would simply grow the size of government without fixing the problem that it claims to be solving.

Energy costs are soaring in this province with no end in sight. Nothing at all in this piece of legislation would do anything to help alleviate the pain that hard-working Ontarians are going through right now because of the price of hydro.

Speaker, I also rise during a time when a minister of this government is charged with contempt of Parliament. This is perhaps the first time ever that a minister of an

Ontario government has been charged with contempt of Parliament. This is a sad day indeed for all of Ontario. On the heels of all of this, this bill gives the Minister of Energy more power and more authority at a time when this government has so utterly violated the trust of the people. It is just simply the wrong time to hand them more power.

Whether it's Ornge or eHealth or cancelled power plants or even MPAC, it seems that there is an unending stream of mismanagement and deceit coming from this Liberal government, scandal after scandal after scandal. The people of Ontario are wondering, "When will it stop?" I hope soon, for the sake of all of us.

People are hurting in Ontario right now. The young people, the families, seniors, students—you name it; people are hurting. Over 600,000 Ontarians are unable to find work. The debt is exploding by the day, and we are spiralling towards bankruptcy, and what does this government do? It gives us another bill that has a fancy-sounding name but accomplishes absolutely nothing. Actually, Speaker, I shouldn't say that. Bill 75 does accomplish something: It gives us bigger government, more bureaucracy and, yes, even more red tape.

Days ago, Gordon Miller, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, a non-partisan officer of this province, released a scathing report entitled *Losing Touch*. In his report, the commissioner slams the government for its record of secrecy. Allow me to quote: "Various ministries persist in hiding environmentally significant decisions from public scrutiny...."

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Bill 75 would give more power to the Minister of Energy—no pun intended here, by the way, Speaker—the same minister who has been charged to have been in contempt of Parliament. This legislation would give more power to this Liberal government, the same government that has been criticized for being secretive by one of its own commissioners. Is this some sort of joke? Well, Speaker, if it is, I must tell you that the people of Ontario certainly are not laughing.

Instead of focusing on how to help Ontarians tackle the high costs of hydro and energy, the Liberal government is giving us Bill 75. The Auditor General has reported that by 2015, the cost of hydro in Ontario will be the highest throughout North America. This bill will do nothing whatsoever to lower those costs. It will simply amount to bigger government and entrust more power and authority to a minister who has lost the trust of this Parliament and the people of Ontario.

Speaker, this government is bereft of ideas; it's that simple. Bill 75 is just another example of this. Perhaps if they didn't have to spend so much time explaining away their scandals, they'd have more time to come up with some ideas on how to help this province.

In my riding of Chatham—Kent—Essex, people are hurting. We have lost over 10,000 jobs since this Liberal government took power in 2003. Perhaps the members opposite should one day come down to Chatham—Kent—Essex and meet with the hard-working middle-class

Ontarians—you know, the people that this government has been ignoring for the past decade. Maybe if the Liberals actually paid attention to the middle class and small business owners, we wouldn't get bills like this one, that kill jobs, grow the size of government and, yes, increase the debt.

Just last month, throughout Ontario, we lost 57,000 private sector jobs, yet 33,000 jobs were added to the government payroll. At a time when we're \$411 billion in debt and have 600,000 Ontarians desperate for work, growing the size of government and debt is insanity. Yet this is what the Liberals are doing. Bill 75 would lead to the creation of a brand new super-agency. By merging the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, a.k.a. OPA, all that we will be left with is twice the government, twice the bureaucracy and, yes, twice the red tape.

How anything in this piece of legislation would cause energy costs to decrease is simply beyond me, Speaker. This is a serious step in the wrong direction for the province. Smaller government, not more, is what Ontario needs. More accountability, not less, is what this government owes to the people. Clearly, this side of the House cannot support this legislation.

It is time for change, and the PC Party will put Ontario back onto the road of prosperity instead of bringing it to the brink of disaster, like this Liberal government is doing. This government has lost the trust of voters and this House. Big government, broken promises, scandals and job-killing legislation are all this government is able to give us. It is time for new leadership.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, I would like to join in this debate on Bill 75. I think it's always important to start off with what makes sense in the bill. I think it makes sense to amalgamate. I think if it will provide us with greater efficiencies and some cost savings, that makes sense; let's do that. I think no one really disagrees with that broad concept of reducing costs and improving efficiencies. But what we've seen today and what we've seen over the past year is that what Ontarians are very concerned about is efficiencies and waste of precious resources when it comes to our taxpayer dollars.

We can avoid wastage and we can avoid inefficiencies if we ensure that on all levels of development, when it comes to electricity, we have adequate public scrutiny. Public scrutiny is paramount, because we are here to serve the interests of the public, and the public should have a direct voice and input into decision-making that impacts their communities.

We have seen what happens when we don't have proper scrutiny, in the gas plant scenario. The public was not consulted appropriately, and at the eleventh hour, after some polling and some last-minute protests, the Liberal government decided to do the right thing and listen to the public. But doing it at the eleventh hour was the problem, and wasting precious resources was a problem. If this consultation was done ahead of time, if

the public had a voice, if there were proper and adequate public inquiries, public forums where the community could have input into where these gas plants were built, we wouldn't have this wastage. We wouldn't see millions of taxpayer dollars being wasted.

That's the crux of the issue when it comes to public scrutiny, and that's definitely missing in this bill. I'd like to see some amendments to ensure that there is adequate public scrutiny involved in these decision-making processes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to respond to the honourable member from Chatham-Kent-Essex.

I just want to mention that since our party came to office in 2003, in terms of management of the electricity system in Ontario, we didn't have blackouts, we didn't have brownouts, we didn't have the generation capacity going down. What we have done is absolutely remarkable when it comes to our resumé in terms of management of the electricity system as a government.

The numbers speak for themselves. You know, at that time, we had four nuclear reactors shut down. We have refurbished four nuclear reactors and we are in the process of refurbishing another four nuclear reactors. We will be building two more nuclear reactors in Darlington in the future.

When it comes to building power lines, we have built 5,000 kilometres of power lines, which is the distance from here to Vancouver. These are major achievements of this government when it comes to the electricity system.

On the project starts, I'm just going to say a few words about our projects in the hydro sector.

We are building the biggest tunnel in Niagara Falls, which is going to produce electricity for 100 years for 160,000 more homes; this is a major achievement. We are building a hydroelectric power facility in the Lower Mattagami with 400 megawatts of capacity. These are the things that this government has done; these are the things we are doing in terms of the electricity sector.

But on the other side, when the Conservative Party was in office for eight years, they absolutely did nothing with the electricity system. Our electricity system was basically in instalments. The capacity came down, the demand came off—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Leeds-Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to take this opportunity to thank the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex for his very thoughtful comments regarding Bill 75.

You know, he made some very sad comments about what's happened to his beautiful riding since the McGuinty government took over. I was particularly struck by his comment that they've lost 10,000 jobs since this government took office. It's a tragedy.

I have to tell you, Speaker, I know no one has done it yet, but I am going to take up his offer. He's invited the McGuinty government to come to his riding, to meet his

constituents, and although none of them—I appreciate that the member for Richmond Hill is carrying the weight over there this afternoon; I think he's the only one that's speaking to this bill. I want to take up the invitation from the member for Chatham—Kent—Essex. I would love to visit his riding and I would love to see those hard-working constituents.

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I think, really, for this government to bring the motion for Bill 75 to the floor this afternoon, especially with what happened today, the fact that we've got a \$650-million scandal—I remember my colleague, my neighbour, the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, who I think has done a great job in eastern Ontario this weekend, talking about the issues with that Lennox plant: the fact that it's at 1% of capacity and now we've got another plant that's being built beside it and we've got to spend hundreds of millions of dollars for transmission lines.

This is ridiculous, that a government is so out of touch—for us to have this debate all of last week and the vote today. For them to bring this bill forward—without a motion for committee, without changing the way they've done business—just shows how out of touch the McGuinty government is on the energy file. We should be helping Ontarians. We should be showing them that we are confident and that we understand their needs. This bill does nothing to do that. You should be ashamed of yourself.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the remarks from the member from Chatham—Kent—Essex, but I want to say that it was the remarks of the member from Richmond Hill that were most telling and illuminating, because again the member, who knows this issue and knows it well, did not speak to the fact that sections of this bill remove huge areas of public scrutiny.

The point that was made by the member from Chatham—Kent—Essex was that we can't afford to let the government run around unscrutinized making power decisions. I have never heard a defence once from the government, in any context, of their desire to cut scrutiny of power planning. I listened to the speech by the minister when he introduced the bill. I listened to the member from Richmond Hill when he split time with the minister. I have listened to subsequent commentary. Never has the bill actually been defended. We hear all about the government's listing of what it sees as its achievements with power—I have a very different understanding of what was done—but they don't speak to the bill. They don't speak to what's really in there. What's the reason? What's the reason for the government to cut public scrutiny of power planning? Why is it that the public won't be able to call witnesses or question witnesses at the Ontario Energy Board when power planning is brought forward? Why does the Liberal government want to turn off the lights for Ontario, put us in the dark when it comes to power planning, put it in this bill and make

sure that, for decades to come, the public is dealt out? It's a recipe for making \$100-million, billion-dollar mistakes. This part of the bill has to be cut out.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. I'd ask the member to respond. Two minutes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I would like to thank the members from Malton, from Richmond Hill, from Leeds—Grenville, as well as from Toronto—Danforth for their comments. I had the opportunity, and I appreciated listening to them very intently, but again, Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, doesn't do anything other than just give the Ministry of Energy more power and, of course, increase the size of government.

By defeating this bill, we will in fact take away the temptation that this government might have to create even more secretive deals. We want to eliminate that temptation. We need to get those energy costs lower in this province, not higher. The energy experiments that this government has been doing over the last four or five years—when I take a look at the IWTs, industrial wind turbines, down in my area. By the end of 2013, we'll have close to 500 industrial wind turbines unless we can put a stop to them some way, somehow. I certainly hope that that happens, because those industrial wind turbines are at a cost of \$5.3 million each. That's what it's costing the companies. This government, Speaker, has, in fact, granted large subsidies on the backs of the taxpayer to pay for those industrial wind turbine experiments that they have. This all comes at a time when this government has wasted over \$650 million of taxpayers' money. How did they waste it, you might ask? Simple. They wasted it on cancelling the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants.

Speaker, in good conscience, I honestly cannot support Bill 75.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order.

Mr. Todd Smith: I would like to welcome somebody in the west gallery. It's a very special day. It's my 13th wedding anniversary, and I have a surprise visitor. My wife, Tawnya, is in from Belleville, so I'd like to welcome her for the first time to the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It's not a point of order, but we welcome you and congratulate you on 13 years.

Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It's my honour to rise today in the House and speak to Bill 75. This legislation, which is sometimes called the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, looks to amend the Electricity Act by amalgamating the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority into a single body, the Ontario Electricity System Operator, which will look after both market and procurement functions.

To the layperson, that sounds like an accomplishment, maybe even a noteworthy one. But in truth, once you start peeling this onion, it reeks. Once again, critical inspection exposes it as just another of this government's window-dressing solutions.

When he first chaperoned this legislation into the public eye, the Minister of Energy proudly announced—boasted—that it would save Ontarians up to \$25 million a year. To the average Ontarian, \$25 million a year sounds impressive enough. But, again, once you size it up in relation to the province's energy sector, or in the context of this government's spending on the whole, you come to understand that \$25 million is only a drop in the bucket.

This is really not much more than a cosmetic fix that will do nothing substantial to change the way that this government operates. Because it doesn't meaningfully alter this government's structural inefficiencies, this merger won't generate any real savings for ratepayers or taxpayers. The province currently spends \$1.8 million more an hour than it takes in, so the savings will vanish 14 hours after it appears. To put that into perspective, when we opened rotations on Bill 75, we were sitting at around seven hours of debate. The tab for this government's reckless spending just goes up and up and up. So, yes, this is a half measure—less than a half measure, really.

We in the Ontario PC caucus don't think that the Ontario Power Authority should be merged with the Independent Electricity System Operator; we believe that the OPA should be discarded altogether. The OPA was formed almost eight years ago as a 15-person transitional body created by the Liberal government to manage Ontario's energy supply.

The Canadian Press had this to say about the Ontario Power Authority back in the summer of 2004: "The Ontario Power Authority, a new organization responsible for the province's long-term power supply, will 'depoliticize' the electricity system and won't just represent another level of bureaucracy, Energy Minister Dwight Duncan said Tuesday.

"There's been a misconception that this is somehow going to be a massive bureaucracy," Duncan said. "I don't think that that's the case at all."

Yet today, the OPA is almost 16 times larger than it was when it started, a 235-person permanent entity where 87 people earn over \$100,000 a year and the CEO earns over \$570,000 a year. That sounds an awful lot like another level of bureaucracy to me. In just eight years, the OPA has managed to burn through over \$375 million in expenditures. Its expenses have risen more than five-fold, from \$14 million in 2005 to \$76.4 million today. Far from depoliticizing the electricity system, it has made it intensely political. After all, short-term partisan interests overruled the OPA's planning for power plants in Oakville and Mississauga.

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The OPA contracted with TransCanada power for a natural gas plant at Oakville's Ford plant site and with Eastern Power for Mississauga's Greenfield South plant. Both deals were, of course, scrapped by the Liberals, who overruled the OPA and decided that the plants were not needed. The OPA's opinion, on the other hand, has been that even with aggressive conservation measures, Ontario needs new generation to ensure adequate and

reliable electricity supply to the area. The Ontario Energy Association has agreed, saying, "The Oakville plant would have been a very important source of electricity for the GTA. What is even more troubling is the message this sends to investors and producers, who may see this as an unfair change of the rules and evidence that Ontario is simply not a safe place to invest in."

Bill 75 is simply moving bureaucrats from one suite to another and creating one super-agency. The move suggests that the government still doesn't recognize the severity of Ontario's debt crisis.

The legislation also makes mention of how the minister is to go about submitting an energy plan for the province's long-term energy needs, but it's vague as to how often, or when, the minister is required to do this. Ontario does need an energy plan—yesterday.

The government needs to revisit all its energy policies, which the Auditor General tells us will send electricity prices for Ontario families skyrocketing by 46% by 2015. That's thanks, in part, to this government's green energy policy, a policy that was, as we know, extensively critiqued in the Auditor General's 2011 annual report. Much of that criticism was aimed squarely at a policy that used 20-year contracts packed with lavish subsidies to entice energy generators to build infrastructure like windmills and solar arrays. Not only do they pay out lavish wind and solar subsidies, but they also guarantee that whenever wind is produced, it will be bought and placed on the grid. That policy then turned around and saddled Ontario consumers with the bill.

In principle, the goal of greening Ontario's energy sector through conservation and renewable energy generation is an admirable one, but in practice, the government's expensive inefficiencies hit households and businesses alike and contribute to sagging job markets and soaring unemployment.

Back in September 1991, a young MPP from Ottawa South said, "I submit I am not going out on much of a limb when I say there is a direct correlation between Hydro's rates and our rate of unemployment in Ontario. As the rates go up, so will the rate of unemployment."

Speaker, 12 years later, the perceptive young man became our current Premier, but by then he had forgotten his insight. It's like the classic Kids in the Hall skit where the guy tries to recall his mother's words of wisdom about eye care, "Never put salt in your eyes," and he goes around repeating this wisdom to himself until he gets it twisted: "Always put salt in your eyes"—cue laughs—except this is Ontario's energy policy here; it's no laughing matter. The Premier had it right back in 1991, and yet his Liberal government has relied on massive spending and costly subsidies for wind and solar that drive up hydro rates, undercutting job creation and competitiveness.

I think most people can appreciate that this approach has been a failure. You may recall that the AG found that under this government's FIT program, ratepayers may actually wind up paying renewable energy generators up to \$225 million a year not to generate electricity—the

reason being that the energy they would be adding to the system is growing faster than consumer demand.

The global adjustment rate offsets the difference between the market price and the contracted rates being paid out to producers—the difference, in other words, Speaker, between what the province is paying people to produce the energy and what they're selling the power for. In theory, this adjustment can move both ways. In reality, this government's lucrative green energy subsidies are intentionally pegged well above market price, so conserving energy—lowering market demand and, with it, pricing—can potentially hook you with a higher hydro bill. You're covering the spread, and the house always wins. And does it ever.

The year it was introduced, employers paid \$700 million in global adjustment payments. In November, the Auditor General revealed that those costs will soon increase tenfold, to \$8.1 billion in 2014. Mark Winfield, the chair of the Sustainable Energy Initiative at York University, has suggested that this sort of off-kilter arrangement calls this province's entire energy policy into doubt. "Some pretty fundamental assumptions about the future of electricity demand in the province are under a serious question mark," Winfield said in February of this year. "If the load forecast is now under a question mark, then effectively the whole plan is under a question mark."

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to rise and again contribute to this debate. I'm going to start by addressing some of the things that I agree with that the member from Burlington has added to this discussion, because things have been quite heated over this last week. It's been quite contentious.

I agree with her when she says that the \$25 million in savings that would be achieved if this bill were to be implemented is really nothing more than a drop in the bucket and that it's a cosmetic fix.

You know, I often think about what things are like in Kenora–Rainy River, and in many cases it's like we live in a different world. It's really a different reality for us. There's no surprise that it's colder. I remember the first winter I spent here, this past winter, I had to sleep with all the doors and the windows open in my apartment because it was so hot. In Kenora–Rainy River, when it's minus 20 to minus 50, we don't have that option. If there's a crack, we want to stuff the crack, because we're freezing. And everything is more expensive, so when it comes to upgrading our homes to make them more energy-efficient, putting in those good windows, putting in the doors, all those things cost more money. Heating our homes costs more money, whether it's with oil or—some people actually rely on electric heat.

So the price of our hydro bills is very important. It's important that we keep that in line and affordable, because in Kenora–Rainy River and across the north, hydro is a necessity. It isn't a frivolous thing. You know, we can decide if we want to go out and get our hair or

our nails done or if we want to wear fancy clothes; it's not a case of that. It's a matter of life and death, and so I think we need to do more with this bill. We need to do something that is going to be reflected on the hydro bills of people living across this province, and I think we can do better.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Madam Speaker, in response to remarks given by the honourable member from Burlington, I would just like to add that this Bill 75 is about basically bringing two organizations together, merging the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator.

Last year, we asked Ontario agencies to look into efficiencies and savings in their operations. They listened and they came back and actually came up with a figure of about a billion dollars in savings in efficiencies. By merging these two organizations, the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator, the government, the taxpayers, the ratepayers, are going to save \$25 million on a yearly basis, which is quite a significant amount of saving.

Also, the newly established agency, if this bill passes, is going to be responsible for market operations, which is distinct from the procurement and contract management. It's also going to be responsible for the provision of opportunities to increase contract efficiencies. The new agency is going to streamline the operation of the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator. It's also going to create an agency which will assist our electricity system and the electricity sector to be more systematic and more efficient.

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These are some of the visions we have in the bill, and once this new agency is created, our electricity system will be much more efficient, and of course this is going to lead to a \$25-million savings for taxpayers and ratepayers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I must say I enjoyed the address by my colleague from Burlington, and I have to say, she's only been here a little less than a year, but I'm very, very impressed with the way she has learned the nuances and the idiosyncrasies of our electricity system and was able to speak in a very, very informed and learned way about it today.

On the other hand, I have to say to my good friend from Richmond Hill here, who seems to be the designated hitter today for the Liberals—

Mr. Steve Clark: The Reza Moridi Show.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Reza Moridi Show.

He says that they asked the agencies. Madam Speaker, they don't ask the agencies anything. All we have to do is look at what this Parliament—and now the finance committee is going to be seized upon, and that is the sanctions and the censure of the Minister of Energy. We find out, and we have found out over the last few weeks

with the release of some of the documents—not those ones that, as my colleague from Nipissing says, have been redacted.

But we find out that the OPA, really the Ontario Power Authority, which was created by the Liberals to be an arm's-length agency to take the politics out of the electricity system, is a toothless tiger. It has been neutered completely. All of the decisions are in the office of the Minister of Energy, and actually, more correctly, in the Premier's office. It is time to put the OPA to bed. It's over. Shut it down. If that's what it is—just another political tool for Dalton McGuinty to play games with at the expense of the people of this province—it is time to shut it down. The OPA performs no useful service if it is nothing but a political pawn in the hands of Dalton McGuinty. It's time to shut it down, and it's time to get that motion to the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again a pleasure to join in this debate and comment on the statements by the members from Burlington, Kenora—Rainy River, Richmond Hill—and I'll never be able to compete with the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

The one thing that I'd like to comment on the member from Burlington—also the member from Richmond Hill mentioned this: \$25 million. In the big picture, for your average person, that's a lot of money, but in the big government picture, what they wasted on the energy system, it is a drop in the bucket.

Also to the member for Burlington—just to prove I do listen to these things—I'm also a Kids in the Hall fan.

But I'd like to spend more time commenting on the member from Richmond Hill and on the Liberals' statements on this bill, their rebuttals on this bill. Again, like the member for Toronto—Danforth said, at no time do they explain why they are removing the last little piece of public scrutiny. Why are they removing that? For what purpose, especially since this House has been seized by this whole problem with lack of public scrutiny, lack of appearance of documents? And yet in this bill they're making what seems to be a—not seems to be—what is a big problem. They're making it worse. Instead of recognizing a problem and trying to fix it, for some reason, whatever reason, they are trying to bury it. Merging two organizations? You know what? If it's done correctly, I think we want to merge four. If it's done correctly, it should work. But why, why, why are you removing the scrutiny by the OPA that has to go through—with the Ontario Energy Board? Why replace it with ministerial plans? Because ministerial plans have gone wrong in the past.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Burlington has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Carefree or optimistic planning has no place in something so central to our province's economic prosperity and quality of life as energy policy. When developing Ontario's energy policy of tomorrow, we should look more seriously at supply and demand,

value-for-money issues and the true lifespan costs of various energy sectors.

Rather than grossly overbuilding the province's energy capacity or handing out subsidies that aren't financially viable, we should evaluate all options to pull together the strongest and most sustainable energy portfolio possible. If we want to woo new economy investors with our reputation of being a forward-thinking province, we first need to be more strategic as we plan for the future. We need to go back to the basic truth that the Premier twiggled to more than 20 years ago: There is a direct correlation between hydro rates and our rate of unemployment in Ontario. As Ontario's hydro rates go up, so will its unemployment rate.

Capital is mobile; Bay Street knows it, and affordable energy is the strong foundation of economic success.

We need policies that will keep prices under control for households, for small businesses, for industry. We need a system that's sustainable, we need substantial change, and we need fresh, inspired thinking. The hedging and fudging that we get from this government on this file is shameful.

As terrifying as our monthly hydro bills have often become, the consequences of sticking to the status quo will be far, far scarier, and there is obviously excellent reason to pay attention to this issue. The well-being of our future generations of Ontario is riding on the outcome.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to join my colleagues today in this debate on Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts—that's quite a mouthful.

Bill 75 amends the Electricity Act, 1998, by amalgamating the Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO, and what should have been the temporary Ontario Power Authority—and I stress, it should have been temporary. Effectively, this bill will assume both agencies under one name: the Ontario Electricity System Operator, the OESO—another acronym for the alphabet soup of agencies, boards and commissions that are already plaguing and slowing down this government.

What's in a name, you ask? Well, supposedly \$25 million of savings through this amalgamation that permanently retains a temporary bureaucracy. However, not a single taxpayer will see any of those savings transferred to lower rates on their hydro bill. So what good is it, really? That is the most pertinent issue, which this bill does absolutely nothing about. The reality faced by the hard-working families of Ontario as they struggle to pay their bills day to day—this is what we need to address, not taking care of temporary bureaucracies and creating more bureaucrats to do more of the same, especially when they started out temporarily.

I went door to door in the last election and I actually met a lady, a really nice older woman. She said she'd

never voted before in her life, but she was going to vote this time. You know why she was going to vote? She was going to vote because on her bill, when she looked at it—and this is a woman on a fixed income, whom every single dollar matters to—she saw a debt retirement charge; she saw HST. You know what? Those two things alone determined what she was going to eat that week. That's not fair, that someone who's a senior citizen, who's doing everything they can in our community to keep their house, to feed themselves, to get from place to place in the city, can't do it because of that extra few bucks a month. It may not mean much to you; it may not mean much to any of us, that extra \$10 a month or whatever it is, but I'll tell you, for her, it changes her life.

The majority will of this Legislature has actually already decided to alleviate the economic burdens faced by families by voting to remove the HST from home heating and hydro. That's the majority of the House. Yet instead of submitting to the majority of the House and the people we're here to serve, the McGuinty Liberals, who are still in full denial of minority government status, thought they would just ignore it, and to this day are still ignoring that majority will. It's not the first time, and it certainly hasn't been the last time that this has happened in this House. We see examples of that almost on a daily basis, brazenly ignoring the majority will—and you still maintain the HST on home heating and hydro.

1700

Here today we are debating an energy bill that will maintain what was intended to be a temporary bureaucracy, the Ontario Power Authority, in the name of saving up to \$25 million per year, none of which will be seen by a single ratepayer on their energy bills. Frankly, the Ontario Power Authority should not be merged but simply scrapped altogether, as my colleagues have said. When it serves no purpose and it does nothing but cost money and create more red tape and bureaucracy, get rid of it. It was formed seven years ago as a 15-person transitional body created by the government to manage the energy supply of Ontario. Today, it has ballooned to 235 people—in seven years, from 15 to 235 permanent people—with 87 of those people earning \$100,000 or more. The CEO himself actually earns \$570,000—not bad for a temporary job, I might add. In just seven years it has burned through over \$375 million in expenditures, and its expenses have risen from \$14 million in 2005 to \$76.4 million today.

Let me tell you, this is not an isolated example. Other so-called temporary government bureaucracies have also ballooned and consumed more resources than they're worth. For example, I am the Pan Am accountability critic, and I've seen the Pan Am organizing committee, as an example, swell from 11 people—still listed on the website—to over 17 making the sunshine list. Sources tell me that this structure is now over 60 strong.

By the way, they continue to hire—people for the Pan Am Games, which happen in 2015, are being hired for permanent jobs. So where are they going after that? Either you're going to pay to get rid of them with a high

severance, or you're going to pay to keep them to do a job that won't exist after 2015. I'd like to know the answer to that question. That's a question for another day, though, Speaker.

When the CEO of the Pan Am Games makes \$550,000, almost five times more than any of us, and we're elected to actually be the executors of this province—it's ridiculous.

Furthermore, if this bureaucracy hadn't swelled to a level that even the government knows is obnoxious, it wouldn't be hiding it behind a shamefully expensive FOI request either. Gouging the taxpayer, overspending, feeding the infinitely expanding bureaucracy under this government and hiding it, is the legacy of this very government. You will live with it, and you'll have to explain why to the taxpayers.

Private jobs are going down and public jobs are going up. We don't build an economy with public service jobs; we build it with private jobs to create that environment. This government has done nothing to create an environment to create new jobs for the people who actually employ the majority of Ontarians: small business.

Another perfect example—and we've talked about it a lot lately—is the seat-saver program for Mississauga and Oakville. The taxpayer is on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars of wasted taxpayer money for scrapping projects to retain their own seats. It has made no practical difference whatsoever either. We're still in minority government. Even if those seats were lost, we'd still be in a minority government today.

What's worse is, we'll never really know the extent of the damage until it's all done. Without these documents, without the blanked-out documents, we'll never really know. You know what? When these sole-sourced plants come online in Lambton and Lennox, who knows what we'll find next? This is just the tip of the iceberg. Why are they so reluctant to provide all these documents, beyond the fact that it was a politically motivated decision? It's also creating a sham of our electricity and power sector.

It just keeps going on and on and on. When will it stop? None of this can be considered surprising, given this government's abysmal record in regard to the energy sector in general. It has done nothing but cost the taxpayers money and provided absolutely nothing in return. That is a bad deal.

It's not just about the swelling and wasteful bureaucracy that has ballooned up under this Liberal government, nor is it just about Bill 75, which itself is a textbook example of this government run amok—all in the name of supposedly helping the taxpayer, but it also is about the cancellation of these power plants.

Our Speaker said himself that the government has the obligation to provide all these documents, and still we haven't gotten all of them. By refusing to do this, this could be one of the first times in history that the government has been found in contempt—a minister of the government. It's ridiculous that they're going to these lengths to conceal these documents.

I don't know about all of you here, but I was elected to represent the people of Barrie and the people of Ontario in this House, and to do it in the best way I can, providing good service for good value. So far, I haven't seen that over there. To me, most of us here hear things like "accountability," "honesty," "transparency" and "integrity"—and they matter, and I believe they should. Bill 75 certainly doesn't go to transparency; it goes to hiding more bureaucracy.

It's high time this government remembers that it serves the people and starts allowing us to do our jobs. We need to get to the bottom of this mayhem in the Ministry of Energy and all the mess that seems to be coming quick, before this energy sector hurts more people. Bill 75 is just going down the same road. Political motivations aside, scandals like this are continuing to prove that McGuinty's Liberal government lacks the organizational and managerial know-how to run Ontario's \$15-billion energy system. It's outrageous that you're willing to break the law, really, to conceal a few documents. The energy sector is one Liberal mess after another, and it's costing us millions of dollars.

I cannot support Bill 75, Speaker. It assumes an unnecessary bureaucracy and doesn't actually pose any real benefit at all to the taxpayer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The member for Barrie has spoken to a number of the fatal flaws in this bill. I personally still think it makes sense to reduce the bureaucracy, eliminate a CEO and eliminate a superfluous board of directors, but more important is a necessity to cut out of this bill the obscuring of public input into power planning.

I sat through estimates with the Minister of Energy earlier this year, and I have to tell you that, even under repeated questioning, I couldn't get commitments from that minister to give information on how the energy system worked, how planning was done, how decisions were carried forward. Madam Speaker, if under the current act, if under the current structure of this Legislature, it is extraordinarily difficult for us, in estimates, to get straight answers, how on earth is the public or the rest of the legislators in this province going to be able to find out what really is going on with power planning?

It's one thing to try and eliminate waste and duplication; most people in this chamber would think that's a good idea. It's another thing to make it even harder for the public to have input into power planning. It's bad public policy if we aren't able to find out what is being decided and why it is being decided. If this government, in the committees where questions are posed as part of our job, was straightforward with its answers, you'd have a very different approach. This bill underlines the fact that this government likes to hide the truth.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure, Madam Speaker, to rise again in this House to speak on Bill 75 and respond

to the remarks given by the honourable member from Barrie. I would like to add that in 2003, when we formed the government, our electricity system was in major disarray. Since then, we have done a lot of work in the electricity system as a whole. For example, we have brought 10,000 megawatts more of generating capacity to the system, and we have done so many things. I'd need hours and hours to talk about our achievements in the electricity sector in this province, but in the short time I have, just in line of merging the two organizations—OPA and the Independent Electricity System Operator—as the subject matter of this bill, we are also looking into consolidation and the restructuring of the local distribution companies.

1710

Actually, the minister has asked three former members of this House, honourable members of this House—Mr. Murray Elston, Mr. Floyd Laughren and Mr. David McFadden—to form a committee to look into how to reorganize, restructure and consolidate these local electricity distribution companies. The panel is looking into potential long- and short-term financial savings through this consolidation. They are looking for benefits for ratepayers. They're also going to look into long- and short-term operational efficiencies and potential risk.

This is the thing our government has been doing in terms of streamlining the electricity sector and the agencies that run our electricity sector as a whole, from generation up to transmission and also distribution.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always a pleasure to hear the member from Barrie, with his insight into this red-herring bill, really citing some—well, many—of the faults of this government and the transgressions that we've seen over just the short time I've been here.

We look at the member from Toronto—Danforth when he talks about getting rid of the CEO. We're talking about getting rid of the whole organization. It went from 15 people up to 235 members of this group. Really, if you look back, just what is its purpose? Do we need to make one super-government agency, or can we do with much less?

The answer to the unemployment problem for this government is to hire more public servants. We've driven up the cost of the public service in this province to double what it was eight years ago. Gee, I remember that for every government job we have, we have to have a private sector forced to pay more in taxes to cover these jobs.

The member from Richmond Hill, who talks about their achievements—really, these achievements should be their transgressions. Let's look at some of the issues that we've seen over the last couple of weeks, details from these plants in the energy sector that they're refusing to give out, even under order from the Speaker. This is not how government runs in Ontario under a minority government. This government maybe should be going back and getting some training to see that there are

changes. When you're in a minority government, you have to work together.

We need information to be able to help out with some of the decisions. Hopefully, we can change their minds on some of these decisions, because it's driving businesses out of Ontario. Businesses are going down to our neighbours in the States, our neighbours in Quebec, because it has become too expensive to run a business in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments or questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The merger to form the Ontario Electricity System Operator may well be a well-intentioned step forward. However, the same cannot be said for the approach the Liberals are taking.

My colleague from Toronto-Danforth noted previously that this bill effectively removes public scrutiny of power planning in Ontario. There are other matters that are addressed by the bill, but the largest, most significant piece, the one that is the greatest concern to the people of Ontario, is that one piece, the transparency and accountability piece.

Unfortunately, the lack of transparency and accountability is only one of the troubling aspects of this bill. Under Bill 75, the government is proposing to remove the Ontario Power Authority's power and duty to develop an integrated power system plan for approval by the Ontario Energy Board. It further removes the Ontario Energy Board's power and duty to review the plan for economic prudence, cost effectiveness and regulatory compliance. In effect, the integrated power system plan will be replaced by ministerial energy plans. In fact, by involving the OEB explicitly in the energy planning process, Bill 75 blurs the distinction between the functions of the OESO and the OEB.

In retrospect, the approach the government is taking can be seen as an extension of their ongoing efforts to exert control over the activities of the OPA and the OEB. We have seen policy imperatives, directives, and now legislation.

The proposed changes to energy planning and procurement are significant and will have far-reaching effects on Ontarians. It's our obligation to make sure there's a balanced approach and there's affordable hydro for—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Barrie has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you very much to the members of the other parties for their comments. I'm happy to respond.

The member from Richmond Hill mentioned that in 2003 they increased the generating capacity of Ontario to several thousand more megawatts. I think it's interesting that that actually happened. It's quite an accomplishment, considering we didn't need any of it because of the loss of manufacturing we've suffered in our province. Now we're actually generating surplus power that we're not selling; we're paying people to take it away from us. That worked out really well for you. I mean, you've had nine

years to fix these problems. Not only have you not fixed them but you made them much, much worse, to a point where we have some of the most expensive electricity in the province. Let's not even get into why that happens. Subsidies—we know these things don't work. The other thing is, let's look at a committee—really?—to try to figure out how you can amalgamate these things and study this and study that. You can study and committee your way all the way through this government. It's not going to help if you don't actually step up and do something at some point.

I'll tell you how you can fix this: Scrap it. You've created this temporary bureaucracy at a massive cost. It's gone from 15 to 235 employees. Just get rid of it. You don't need a committee to tell you that, do you? Can't you figure that out for yourselves? It is ridiculous that you've just continued to kick the can down the road and make sure that the taxpayers are going to foot the bill. Right?

It's enough. This bill should never pass. It should never have been brought up in the first place. The answer is simple: Scrap it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always an honour to stand in this chamber and debate in a formal fashion that is conducive to our democratic process here and for all democracies throughout.

I want to just talk briefly, a little bit, about some history. A wise visionary of this great province, Sir Adam Beck, at the turn of the last century, early on, had a great vision for this province. Mr. Beck, in his infinite wisdom, decided to develop hydroelectricity and provide electricity for the Toronto and York regions and throughout this province of course. I had the privilege of going down and visiting a few of the early hydro plants that brought electricity to this great province—and in fact are why this province was the industrial heart of Canada. Because of Sir Adam Beck's vision of providing cheap, cheaply produced electricity, this province was founded and enriched by that vision.

We're lacking, in some cases I would argue, individuals with vision once again. Here's an individual who made this province great and actually has a statue just south of here on University Avenue. If you go down—and I would encourage the members to go down and see the fine statue that was erected in his honour.

I was talking to an individual back in my riding, Mr. Daniel Christie. It was interesting. He pointed out—because we were talking about my vision of having a hydro development brought into Northumberland-Quinte West and what that would mean economically for the region—that, in fact, if you look at many of the statues that are situated, they usually face south. Mr. Beck, his monument, is looking up University Avenue to Queen's Park, and Mr. Christie pointed out to me, "Rob, the reason that statue is pointed facing Queen's Park is a subtle reminder"—to each of us, as parliamentarians and as elected members for our various ridings—"that his

vision of cheap electricity to the masses of this province is what made this province great.”

1720

So Sir Adam Beck had this vision, and he was the one, I would argue, who had a great impact on why Ontario became the haven for individuals from far and abroad to come and bring their families here, searching for a better life in this province of Ontario, as many families have since come to Ontario looking for a better life for their families, a better education for their families—opportunities that they don't have in other jurisdictions from where they came.

Unfortunately, this has changed over the last nine years. What we've seen here with Bill 75 and the so-called amalgamation of more bureaucrats—it's disheartening to see that Sir Adam Beck's vision of low-cost electricity is being destroyed, not only for the industrial base but also for the residents and small businesses who now find themselves struggling month to month to pay their bills, to keep their shops open, to keep the lights on in their homes.

The OPA, as mentioned by many of my esteemed colleagues here today, started out as a transitional body of 14 individuals, but over the course of the years from when it was established to the present—not many years in fact; seven years—we have a body that was supposed to be temporary and has gone from 14 to over 230 members, over 80 of whom are making well over \$100,000. Let me just say that I don't begrudge individuals getting paid a decent wage, not at all, but when you see the waste that has been brought forth in the bureaucracy that this government has ballooned, you have to question yourself: “Why can the CEO of the OPA make close to \$600,000?” To me, that's ludicrous. He's not a brain surgeon. This is an individual who oversees—I don't know what.

Interjection: Ask him.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I should ask him. I should maybe follow him around for a day to see what he does. It would be interesting—

Interjection: Take your MPP to work.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Yes; take your MPP to work.

Here we have an example of bloated bureaucracy, the public sector has ballooned, and what we find—and this is based on fact—is that the public sector does not generate wealth; the private sector generates wealth. But with the overregulation and red tape of this government and the ballooning bureaucracies of the public sector, it's unbalanced. So what we have is a restriction of growth economically in the province of Ontario. It doesn't make sense to fundamentally artificially make another bureaucracy, with another obscure acronym that the masses can't relate to. It does not make sense.

My esteemed colleague from Barrie made the point about an elderly lady on a fixed income in his riding when he was campaigning and how she found it very difficult, because of the skyrocketing price of electricity, to even pay for food or choose what she was going to eat based on that.

I came across a couple very similar to that: an elderly couple in the town of Brighton who were struggling to make ends meet because this government has failed to do the right thing when it comes to ensuring that electricity prices for individuals in this province are affordable. It's shameful to see the great vision of Sir Adam Beck thrown away for political attributes that, quite frankly, shouldn't be brought forward in this.

Here we have the shifting of the gas plants that, once again, is going to have a huge financial impact—a negative impact, I might say—on Ontarians as a whole, whether you own your own company, factory, you're a small business or you're just the plain working poor out there trying to make ends meet. But this government has shown, throughout my early stages here at the Legislature, that they don't listen. They say they want to listen and be co-operative. We have some ideas. Tim Hudak and the PC Party have put forward great ideas that are going to help individuals in Ontario, not hinder them from expanding their businesses and paying their bills.

The gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga are just a small tip of the iceberg. I could go on about the other scandals—Ornge, eHealth and the many others that have taken place under the guise of this government's so-called “Moving Ontario Forward Together,” but I don't have time for that, Madam Speaker. Unfortunately, I'm out of time. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions.

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, a pleasure to add some words to this debate on Bill 75 and to comment on some of the comments made by the member from Northumberland—Quinte West. We share a deep respect for the power of hydroelectricity. We disagree on some things, but we also agree that this government lacks vision on this issue because the industrial heartland was built on affordable public power, in most cases, generated through public electricity.

The problem we're facing here—and in my region as well—is that our biggest industries were built—there's a reason why the paper mill in Iroquois Falls was built in a place called Iroquois Falls: because they had the ability to dam up the river and make affordable power. There's a reason why Xstrata in Timmins was where it was. It was closed because the power prices got too high. But the flipside to that is, now I have power generators in my region that are afraid they are also going to close, and do you know why? Because they no longer have their major customer, because Xstrata closed.

On the face of it, it would make sense for the OPA who buys the power and the IESO who regulates the power to actually integrate so that you could make the power go to places where it should, because closing Xstrata didn't help the province. It might look good on paper, but actually we're just wasting power now that could have been used to employ those people. But again, the final word for this bill—it has to have public scrutiny. Why is this government tearing public scrutiny out of power?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the honourable member from Northumberland—Quinte West for his remarks, particularly in relation to Sir Adam Beck. We all owe a lot to Sir Adam Beck. He was a visionary man, as the honourable member indicated. He's the man who created the first publicly owned utility in the world, and he is the man who built Niagara Falls. He was a great man; there is no question about that. Like the honourable member, I invite every member of this Legislature, while they are walking on the beautiful University Avenue, to just step for a moment in front of his sculpture and pay respect to this great Ontarian and great Canadian.

1730

Our government, actually, has been following the path of Sir Adam Beck in the area of hydroelectricity. We are building a dam, a hydroelectric power station, at Lower Mattagami. A 400-megawatt power plant is under construction. As well, we are building the biggest tunnel in the world in Niagara Falls, which is going to produce electricity for 160,000 homes in Ontario for the next century, for 100 years. This is the path of Sir Adam Beck, which our government has been following.

When you look at, again, the achievements of this government, in the context of Sir Adam Beck's achievements, bringing the Green Energy Act to Ontario by the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario, was another visionary step when we come to the electricity sector in this province. This was a major initiative which we brought into Ontario. Now we include renewable energy along with other sources of energy for electricity production: hydroelectricity, nuclear and renewable.

My time is over. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of comments on the member for Northumberland—Quinte West and his remarks this afternoon on this bill.

I have to tell you, Speaker, that although I grew up and spent basically all my life, save and except a few of those early years, in Leeds—Grenville, I was actually born in the member for Northumberland—Quinte West's riding. My mother, my late father and my brother were all born in his riding. Although I don't have very many relatives there, I know that I can speak for many of his constituents in thanking him for being such a vocal advocate for a variety of issues in his riding. Although he's a new member, I think he's performed admirably, and today was one of those days that he seemed to really hit the nail on the head when it comes to the difficulties with this particular piece of legislation, so I want to compliment him on his address today.

I think it's fair for all of us to be concerned, as the member is, about the creation of this mega-agency with the OPA and the IESO. The reason that I think we need

to be concerned is because of the way this government deals with creating agencies. They're not good at it. They have difficulties with it, difficulties managing it. I think we've seen it with eHealth, with Ornge and with OPA. They're just a few examples that come to mind—and especially OPA. When you see a government that creates a temporary, 15-person agency, and it becomes a who's who list on the sunshine list, you really have to question.

Although I do have my problems with OPA, the last thing that they would need would be to have the minister with more powers. I think the legislation goes in the wrong direction. I think the member has very adequately expressed some concerns he has with the way the government operates, and I want to congratulate him for putting those comments on the record this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the member for Northumberland—Quinte West for his comments—his reference to Sir Adam Beck. There's an interesting book in the legislative library here, Adam Beck and the Ontario Hydro, for anyone who wants to read the history—Sir Adam Beck, who fought the Liberals because the Liberals then were privatizers and they're privatizers now; Sir Adam Beck, who fought conventional coal interests, who said, "You know what? This newfangled long-distance distribution of power isn't going to work." Sir Adam Beck fought for the leading edge of renewable energy technology in his time, just as many now fight for renewable energy technology.

It makes sense to develop Ontario in the 20th century. We need new renewable energy technologies in the 21st. But to proceed with a shutting off of public interest, public research into, public commentary on investment in power simply allows privatization to grow in the dark.

Madam Speaker, right now, this government has a panel looking at privatizing the local distribution utilities in each of the regions of this province. There will be only one outcome, and that will be higher hydro rates. Right now, this government is looking at privatizing transmission lines in Ontario, the east-west tie across the top of Lake Superior. There can only be one outcome: higher hydro rates.

Sir Adam Beck fought for renewable power. He fought for public power. He took on the Liberals. He took on financial interests in London, England, that fought against public power. Madam Speaker, he set a good example for us. We should follow it: public power, open public participation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Northumberland—Quinte West has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I would just like to thank the members from Timiskaming—Cochrane, Richmond Hill, Toronto—Danforth and, of course, my esteemed colleague from Leeds—Grenville, who I use as a mentor. He gives me solid advice at times, and I do rely on that.

We do want to again just mention the mismanagement that we've seen from this government. When they bring

forward a bill like Bill 75, one has to ask, what's the reason behind this? What's truly the reason behind bringing forward such a bill?

I sometimes think that there are secret motives. I'm not sure for political gains or what, but I have seen, Madam Speaker, the two closures of the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants and the relocation of that and how that's going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario at least \$650 million. That means an increase in your electricity bill of about 1.4% or 1.6%. The industries of this province are even going to get harder hit with that, Madam Speaker.

Here we are debating something which I think really—and I'm glad we've had this opportunity to speak to Bill 75, because it makes sure that we are doing our jobs here, as pointed out earlier, Madam Speaker. That is to keep this government accountable and transparent. Unfortunately, we haven't seen that from this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Speaker, at first look, this bill sounds like a good-news bill. But we didn't need to hear many words from this minister before we clearly saw that it was a bad-news bill for Ontario consumers, the seniors who see their pensions swallowed up by the ballooning monthly hydro bills, or our businesses that managed to survive the economic downturn and this government's skyrocketing taxes, fees and regulations, only now to be dealing with the highest energy prices in North America, higher than even the countries in Europe. To a sane person, it looks like the McGuinty government is trying to bankrupt this province.

This is clearly just another red-herring bill to get people's attention away from the real problems that this government is facing, those of scandals at Ornge and eHealth, Green Energy Act fallout, and now the incredible waste of the cancellation of not one but two gas-powered plants that was nothing more than a seat-saver to cling to power.

In our short time here, I see a government that's scrambling to keep information from the opposition and the public. I see their clear signs of desperation. In fact, in just the short time since I returned to the Legislature a few weeks ago, we see a Premier and his high-ranking senior staff refusing to go before the committee looking into Ornge, the CAO of Ornge refusing to appear before the committee, and the government delaying the reinstatement of committees, essentially silencing our ability to provide the drastically needed oversight that this government is unwilling and unable to provide. And now we see a minister of the crown who has been warned of being in contempt for refusing to disclose essential documents to this House throwing out rhetoric about trumped-up issues that may raise the already-obscene cancellation penalties to the people of Ontario.

1740

It's been two years since this expensive and selfish seat-saver decision was made, and they are still afraid to let Ontarians know the true costs. The more desperate

their efforts, the more it makes one wonder just what these costs are and who benefitted from the decisions. Six hundred and forty million dollars and counting—what are the McGuinty Liberals so desperate to hide? What is the true bill that the people of Ontario will have to pay? Because it is us that will have to pay the bill.

Back to this bill: This government claims that the merger will save \$25 million a year, certainly a novel idea if, in fact, it was true. We're not against the principle, but does this government find savings, efficiencies and redundancies only amongst its critics? The McGuinty government has turned the Ontario Power Authority, once a 15-person transitional body created seven years ago by this government to manage Ontario's power supply—let's look at its record: It's grown to a 235-person permanent board that burns through \$76 million per year. The board has become a simple reward for loyal Liberal supporters. It's time for the McGuinty government to stop using patronage appointments to government boards as their major policy to combat high unemployment, one that has been higher than the national average for more than six years.

Our PC plan for the OPA was not to shuffle bureaucrats around, making an even larger super-agency, but to eliminate it all together and save the entire \$76 million. If this new legislation is not going to save money, what's it all about? I would suggest it's just another ploy to shift attention away from failed government energy policies that are bankrupting this province. The energy sector needs deep reform, and the McGuinty government is simply not up to it—to putting jobs and the people of Ontario first.

The OPA—the Ontario Power Authority—the Ontario Energy Board—the OEB—and the Independent Electricity System Operator have all stated very openly that “no independent, objective, expert investigation had been done to examine the potential effects of renewable energy policies on prices, job creation, and greenhouse gas emissions,” and that “no thorough and professional cost/benefit analysis had been conducted to identify potentially cleaner, more economically productive, and cost-effective alternatives to renewable energy, such as energy imports and increased conservation.”

Now we see two of them being amalgamated. It makes one wonder if they're not just being penalized for doing what they're supposed to do: provide independent advice to the minister. Very similar to a method used by another provincial agency, Ornge, that the people of Ontario have now unfortunately become very familiar with, for all the wrong reasons—this government agency's way of getting to the bottom of perceived corruption was to send employees letters threatening them with lawsuits and firings if they went on record.

I sit on the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, where we tried to bring the OPA before the committee to look at some of the very issues this government seems to be having with this group, but our answer was “no.” The McGuinty government had structured it, as they had with Ornge, the IESO and this proposed new

Ontario Electricity System Operator, so that it cannot be reviewed by the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

So there will be no oversight over the new agency, one of over 300 that this government has created. Can you believe that? From 250 to over 600 since they took power. It just goes to show that if you want to be serious, you have to do the right thing and be prepared to listen and put Ontario first.

If we were to believe their intentions, after all the years of mismanagement, broken promises, rising taxes, deficits, debt and unfunded liabilities—and did I say “broken promises”?—the people of my great riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry would be very quick to remind me of an old saying: Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. I say shame on this Liberal government, which has put their political gain ahead of the people of Ontario.

We have seen the fire-from-the-hip decisions of the Green Energy Act double and on the way to triple the cost of energy in this province, to the point where we are the highest in North America—a once huge economic advantage destroyed; truly hard to believe. But still, as pointed out by the 2011 Auditor General’s report, this government has a duty to let the people of Ontario know what the power is costing and to stop denying the problem and hiding the true costs, blindly promoting an energy plan that pays up to 80 cents a kilowatt hour, in spite of having surplus power that we can’t handle by spilling over \$300 million over our dams in 2011 or by shutting down our nuclear and gas-powered plants. No, we had to pay our neighbours to take the power off our hands as well, at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars a year. At a time when our rates are skyrocketing, we are subsidizing the cost of power to our neighbours, our competitors.

The Auditor General put the bill at over \$4 billion a year, enough to build 12 large hospitals a year, and over two million MRIs per year—unbelievable. The global adjustment charge will reach \$8 billion by 2014. Maybe now it’s clear to this government when the Auditor General says that you lose two to four jobs for every green job you create. Whether you took the old math that I took in school or the new math that my children took, the message is clear: Four, three or even two jobs lost for every one you create is a losing formula. Some 300,000 lost manufacturing jobs because companies can do it cheaper elsewhere—not a record to be proud of.

But the sad thing to say is, it gets worse. This Liberal McGuinty government’s energy policies have split rural Ontario, pitting families and neighbours against each other, and taken the land use planning away from municipal governments—and the economics are even worse. We are looking at an additional 45% increase in power rates over the next five years; a deficit they can’t control and which is 10 times worse than our neighbour, Quebec, the next worst; and a debt that has doubled and is tracking to be \$411 billion.

Our financial situation is quite frankly critical. This government has received three credit downgrades and

still refuses to acknowledge the problem. The people of my riding tell me the obvious: Ontario can’t tolerate them anymore. Instead of creating bills that sound good, we need a government that will make the tough decisions necessary to allow the ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit of the hard-working people of Ontario to create new jobs and new companies, making Ontario the economic engine of Canada once again.

Madam Speaker, I can’t support this bill. It is only an attempt to change the channel away from the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Ontario went down a mistaken path, and that path was—there was this belief that if we privatized electricity—it was advertised as a way to make electricity more affordable. I, for a moment, had a moment of weakness, and I thought maybe this might make sense. The theory is that competition would bring prices down; that if we privatize it, it would bring prices down. I’m happy to say that my moment of weakness passed, and I thought this was a ridiculous idea.

Now what do we have? We see that it has absolutely flopped as an idea, that privatizing and having public and private electricity providers has resulted in increased electricity prices. It is not the way to go. When there is a necessity, when there is something that the public requires, like health care, like education, like electricity, these should be publicly held, publicly delivered, publicly controlled. That’s the direction we should be heading in as a province. We went down the wrong way and we need to correct that.

I know where the blame lies. There are a number of individuals and parties available in this assembly today that hold the blame for that. But let’s all work together to move in the right direction now. We all understand that that was a mistake, that private electricity is not the way. Like my honourable colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane said, let’s remember Sir Adam Beck and not Samsung Adam Beck. We need a champion for public energy. We need a champion for public inquiries and public scrutiny, not private deals for electricity. That’s not the direction we need to be heading in this province.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Madam Speaker, it’s a pleasure again to stand up in this House and speak on this bill.

In response to the comments made by the honourable member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, I would like to make this statement: In contrast to October 2, 2003, which is, as of today, nine years in the past, when our electricity system was in disarray, today I am proud to stand in this House and make the statement that our electricity system is in an excellent state. We are producing enough electricity to meet the demands of the people of Ontario, even in the hot days of summer and in the cold days of winter when northern Ontario needs more electricity.

During last year, 2011, we produced 142 million megawatts of power, and 80% of our power came from renewable and emission-free sources. We have 5.2 million electricity consumers in this province: 145 of them are industrial customers, and 60 major industries use one fifth, 20%, of our electricity.

When it comes to the price of electricity in Ontario, it is comparable to the price of electricity in our neighbouring provinces and neighbouring states, and it is much cheaper than in many European jurisdictions, such as Germany, France and the UK.

Today, 57% of our electricity comes from nuclear—our reactors are among the best performers in the world—and 22% of our electricity comes from hydro-electricity. Only 3% comes from coal, and we are going to get rid of coal within about two years from now. We have introduced renewable energy instead of coal—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to comment on my colleague from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

I want to touch a little bit on the comments from the parliamentary assistant here, who's been assigned to the rock pile today. He can't leave his seat for hours because he's got to be the apologist for the government.

The Liberal energy policy probably ranks among the greatest frauds ever perpetrated on the people of the province of Ontario. That's exactly what it is. It's a fraud. It's a shell game. It's smoke and mirrors.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

My friend Mr. McDonell touched on it. You've got power that costs two cents a kilowatt hour, such as hydraulic, hydro power, being allowed to pass over the dams generating nothing. Why? Because the McGuinty government has decided it would rather have expensive wind and solar power coming into the grid at 13.5 cents or up to 80.2 cents per kilowatt hour, would rather have them coming into the system and allow that natural, emission-free, clean, green power that is our water, that was the basis of our hydro system in the first place when it was envisioned by our forefathers—"We'll just let that pass over the dam."

That is one of the shameful things that has happened under the watch of the McGuinty government here in the province of Ontario. Billions and billions of dollars have passed over that dam over the years, and billions more will pass as this government decides that politics trumps good energy policy.

And who pays? It is the people out there who have seen their hydro bills—we're only 1.2 cents away from having tripled the price of hydro in this province. It's gone from 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour to now 11.7 cents; another 1.2 cents—and they'll do it shortly—it will be triple the price of power under their watch.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Madam Speaker, before us today is a debate about the direction of this province. It's as simple as that, and it always has been. Electricity has been a central factor in the development of Ontario, in the development of our industrial base and, frankly, of our technological base. The development of hydro at the beginning of the 20th century gave us the ability to send out engineers and, frankly, financiers around the world to show people how to develop renewable power.

What we've seen, though, in the last decade, Madam Speaker, with the introduction of large-scale privatization of our electricity system, has been gross overbuilding of gas facilities, investment in nuclear plants that we don't need and a neglect of 21st-century technologies and efficiency in conservation, with renewable power—solar and wind—essentially set up as sideshows because they are not going to be more than 10% of the power mix here in Ontario if the Liberals have their way. A combination of privatization, further investment in nuclear, and investment in gas-fired power that we can't afford and don't need: Those things together have driven up the price of electricity in Ontario, undermined our environmental goals and undermined our ability to develop an industrial society for the future.

Madam Speaker, what's proposed today, the part of this bill that takes away public scrutiny, that deals the public out when it comes to actually assessing what the plans are, has to come out of this bill. That part is the road to disaster. We're going to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on the Liberal seat-saver plans because of a lack of public scrutiny. We can't have more of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you to the speakers.

The member from Malton clearly talked about the price increases. They're so high that the people of Ontario are now forced to pay prices that are driving our businesses out of town, out of the province. Revenues that we desperately need to offset our services are now gone.

The member for Richmond Hill talked about the 2003 problems. But I wish he'd also go into the study that was done at that time which showed that the problem wasn't in Ontario. It was a result of a problem in the States, a problem with the grid that started in Ohio. It's just another red herring thrown out there. What was their solution? Their solution is to close down the manufacturing. Our peak hydro usage is still back in 2003, even though our population has increased significantly. Our business is gone. That's the problem. And that is their energy policy.

I heard the honourable member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke when he talked about the Liberals' failed policies. I won't use the word "fraud." They were really all about a message to the people that's not the right message. It's not the message that the Auditor General said they'd need to give out. They need to tell the people what this is costing. We're paying 80 cents for power because it sounds good, but we're dumping two-

cent power, and the people of Ontario have to pay the bill—almost three times the cost. We look at the Lennox plant—another red herring bill. We're actually taking a plant that is not being used today and we're adding half the capacity again to it, at at least \$1.2 billion. But we clearly don't need it.

I want to thank Toronto–Danforth for his talk about the neglect of 21st-century technology. Surely we have

the best minds in this country and in the world. Let's use them.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Soo Wong

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of Ontario**

First Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 3 October 2012

Mercredi 3 octobre 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 October 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 octobre 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NON-PROFIT HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2012 LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES COOPÉRATIVES DE LOGEMENT SANS BUT LUCRATIF

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Orders of the day. The Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, sir. I can see your voice is starting to come back a little bit today. It's good to hear.

Government order G65.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Order G65. Resuming the debate adjourned on October 2, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés coopératives et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne les coopératives de logement sans but lucratif et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: Good morning. I want to thank the Minister of Economic Development for calling this order this morning. As the Ontario PC critic for municipal affairs and housing, I'm pleased, on behalf of our caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to speak to Bill 65, the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act, 2012.

I have to say, right off the top this morning, that we'll be supporting this piece of legislation. I think it's long overdue, and it finally gets on with addressing an issue that the current government has promised to fix since 2007.

I've had the great opportunity since I was elected, and especially since I became the critic for municipal affairs and housing, to meet with a number of co-operative

housing advocates. Yesterday, in the east members' gallery, we had the good folks from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. I have to tell you that these folks are really patient. Not only were they here yesterday for the minister's lead and her parliamentary assistant's, the member for York West, but they were here last week on the same day that Mr. Leone moved his motion. They've been here many times to advocate with members of provincial Parliament.

Even though they're not here today, MPPs will get the chance to meet them again on October 17; they're going to be here at Queen's Park for their annual co-operative housing day. I encourage people to come and see them, to meet with them during that lobby day. I think MPPs from all three parties will continue to look forward to seeing them at Queen's Park to have the opportunity to discuss very important issues within the co-op housing sector.

I've said many times that these folks—I've met with them and discussed issues that they feel are important, and I think this bill proposes to finally bring about some of the changes they have lobbied for, for many, many years. This bill that we're debating today is good public policy. It's a bill that I believe quite strongly is non-partisan in nature. I hope, and I think, by the comments and questions we had yesterday morning after the minister's and the parliamentary assistant's speeches—based on those comments anyway, I think we have some consensus on how to move forward.

Having said that and having acknowledged that there is lots of common ground in this bill for us to agree upon, it certainly hasn't been an easy road for the proponents of this legislation to travel. It has been quite a long journey, Speaker, and I'm a bit puzzled about why that was the case. Why is it, when we've got an issue that has been talked about for years—and one the government knows full well there is strong consensus for—that it has taken so long for us to have this bill brought forward for second reading? I think it's one of the reasons why the general public gets disenchanted with this place. It's bad enough that it takes us a long time to pass contentious pieces of legislation, but I can appreciate people's frustrations when we have a bill like Bill 65, which there is general agreement on.

The government, as I said earlier, promised to do this for about five years. In that time, we saw a private member's bill on this issue. It was Bill 198, introduced by the member for Etobicoke Centre. Sadly, for people in the industry, that bill, as we all know, died on the order paper.

Before I get too far in my remarks, I want to acknowledge those proponents from the co-op housing sector who have worked so hard to get us to this point. They have every right to celebrate the fact that they've had so many years to try to get this bill, and the fact that we're able to discuss it at second reading is a pretty important part.

That said, and despite our support for this bill, I have to say it's difficult for me to jump for joy today. It's hard for me to pat the government on the back enthusiastically, because, after all, it has taken several ministers and a number of years to really be able to pilot through a very, very straightforward bill. I think, from our side, we just have to say on behalf of the industry that it's about time Bill 65 is here.

Yesterday, the minister outlined in her leadoff some of the issues around Bill 65. It amends the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and the Co-operative Corporations Act. I should also say that Bill 65—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Do you realize you're the first Tory to talk about housing in this place?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm sure the Attorney General is going to provide two minutes of questions and comments when I'm finished.

Bill 65 also makes some minor amendments to the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010, and the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act, 2010. But the primary purpose of the bill is to move most co-op tenure disputes out of the courts and put them before the Landlord and Tenant Board. Speaker, this is common sense, and again begs the question why it has taken this government so long to be able to put this forward.

0910

Perhaps it's not that surprising, though. Proponents of this legislation have said it will streamline the dispute process to make it faster, more efficient, more cost-effective and more transparent for both co-ops and their members, and we all know, when we use those types of adjectives, that we sometimes don't use them when we describe the McGuinty government. From eHealth to Ornge and the scandalous decision to sacrifice hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars on the gas plant seat-saver plan, this government has hardly been the model for efficiency, cost-effectiveness or transparency. Perhaps, Speaker, the government was just waiting to bring this legislation in during this, the international year of co-operatives, as declared by the United Nations.

Regardless, as I said, the Ontario PC caucus welcomes this legislation and its primary function of taking most co-op disputes away from the courts and moving them into the Landlord and Tenant Board. Ontario PCs have long supported amending the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act in a way that would allow for this new process. We've done so for some very, very good reasons. First, Ontario's already clogged court system simply doesn't need the additional burden posed by having its dockets filled with this type of civil matter. Our court system has enough trouble

already, and anything we can do to reduce the number of cases in that system should be welcomed.

Beyond reducing clutter in the courts, I think we can all agree that that's really not the appropriate place for landlord and tenant disputes over tenure. After all, when any other landlord in the province is dealing with an eviction or other dispute, they follow the well-established Landlord and Tenant Board process. So it only makes sense for non-profit housing co-operatives to follow the same process. But they can't do this under the existing legislation because co-op accommodations are governed by the Co-operative Corporations Act rather than the Residential Tenancies Act.

In welcoming this move to the Landlord and Tenant Board, I want to stress very clearly that I know there are some serious problems with the Landlord and Tenant Board. Both landlords and tenants aren't happy with the way the board operates, and I'll be speaking to some of the valid reasons that create that unhappiness a little later.

Regardless of those problems, I think we would agree that Ontario's courts are not the venue to resolve disputes between co-ops and their members. We know it takes too long, and the costs are too much to continue using that eviction process. Currently some 300 of these co-op disputes end up before the courts every year, and it's estimated that these cases saddle co-op members with an annual legal bill—I was astounded by this, Speaker—that totals approximately \$1 million. I understand that cases typically cost between \$3,000 and \$5,000 to resolve; however, in some cases a single case could be up to \$50,000. And those figures don't take into account the tremendous amount of time that both parties are involved with in terms of paperwork to resolve this dispute in our already overburdened court system.

Again, it's unfortunate that the McGuinty government has taken so long to finally get this moving. Using the figures provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the five-year wait seems to mean that some \$5 million was spent on legal costs to resolve these co-op tenure disputes through the courts. It would have been nice to have some action on the file earlier—something I think all three parties would agree with—so that that \$5 million could have been saved.

Let's look at how Bill 65 works. The inner workings of this bill set up a process by which a non-profit housing co-op can make application to the Landlord and Tenant Board to terminate a former member's occupancy and ultimately evict the former member. These provisions under Part V of the Residential Tenancies Act are the same any landlord in the province would use to evict a tenant.

A co-operative has two avenues to terminate a member's occupancy. As with other landlords, the co-operative can issue a notice when it is pursuing an eviction under one or more of the 11 instances set out in the Residential Tenancies Act or the RTA. These include nonpayment of rent, committing illegal acts or causing willful damage to the property.

The new process would also allow the co-operative to pursue an eviction from the Landlord and Tenant Board

without notice in some very limited circumstances. They include:

- where a former co-op member has either terminated his or her membership, and therefore their occupancy rights;

- where the member's occupancy rights have expired by virtue of a predetermined date; and

- where the former member is a post-secondary student in a student housing co-operative and has given notice of termination.

These are very straightforward circumstances which under the existing system would have required that the co-op head to court to complete what really amounts to routine paperwork. Under this bill, they will be able to get these situations resolved by applying directly to the Landlord and Tenant Board.

We should note that this legislation does not entirely remove the role of the courts in the dispute resolution process. There will remain some tenure disputes that will continue to go before the courts, that are not spelled out under the Residential Tenancies Act. These deal with specific bylaws to individual co-ops, and they include provisions like the no-pet rule violation, and also failure for the member to undertake certain member duties, like snow removal or lawn care.

These disputes that can't be resolved by the board itself for the co-op still would ultimately have to be adjudicated by our provincial courts. Bill 65, however, adds a new section to the Co-operative Corporations Act to ensure that these cases will be judged on the merits of each case. In other words, procedural irregularities will no longer be able to trump the basis upon which a co-op board has decided to revoke a person's membership. This is important because it ensures the wishes of the co-op board—which after all represents the members of the co-op—are the primary focus whenever the courts do have to become involved. It's easy to see how this provision will ensure these hearings don't get bogged down in procedural wranglings and stay focused on the issue at hand.

Bill 65 also changes the co-op act in a number of ways to streamline the internal dispute resolution processes used by individual housing co-operatives. Co-ops have functioned very well under these democratic rules for years, and it's essential that they retain the ability to do so regardless of the amendments outlined in Bill 65.

We should also note that respecting this well-established internal dispute resolution process, Bill 65 does not allow individual members to make application to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Disputes that co-op residents may have with the housing provider regarding issues over charges or maintenance will continue to use that internal resolution process. That's the right decision, because there's no need to further encumber the Landlord and Tenant Board with these disputes when a very sound process is already in place within each co-op in the province. Again, these are all changes that the Co-operative Housing Federation and other proponents have been seeking for years.

Let's talk about a little background on how Bill 65 proposes to usher these in. As I said, these are not new, they're not surprising, as the co-op sector has been engaging members of provincial Parliament on these issues for years. Of course, I appreciate that we do need to ensure that all voices are heard on whatever issue we're debating, no matter how much consensus there is between MPPs. The public's voice is also important, and although when I was speaking to the member for York West yesterday he indicated that, "Wouldn't this be a great bill to give second and third reading to?" I think we still need to have that opportunity to have the public look at it and to put it into committee.

Now, again, whenever a politician on this side of the House talks about committees—the government has had terrible difficulty managing its minority. We still have not got a committee system set up. So even if we allowed debate to collapse today, which I know is not going to happen, there would be no place for this bill to go. I think it would be a shame, when we have general support from all three parties, that this bill would languish with no committees. I'm sure that we want the public to have an opportunity to come to hearings and to also give them an opportunity to propose amendments before we bring this bill back for third reading.

0920

I also wanted to spend some time this morning to step back and to look at exactly what housing co-operatives are and the important role that they play in our province's housing mix. Housing co-operatives are not-for-profit organizations in which members do not own equity in their residence. If they move, their home is returned to the co-op to be offered to another individual or family who needs an affordable home. That's what's great about co-operative housing: it's a diverse mix of where people can call home. They're an example of the kinds of neighbourhoods any sound housing strategy should strive to achieve.

Some co-op members pay reduced monthly rent that's based on their income, with government support funding the difference. Because they are non-profits, co-ops charge members only enough to cover the costs of repairs, as well as ensuring that they can sustain a reserve of some funds. The result is that they provide housing that can be more affordable, which is why we need to champion them as a very important part of Ontario's affordable housing strategy.

As I mentioned earlier in discussing the amendments proposed by Bill 65, co-ops are democratic organizations that are controlled by their members. Every member has a vote in decisions about their housing, including electing the co-op's board of directors. Each housing co-operative is a legal organization, incorporated as a co-op.

Anyone watching at home this morning may not be completely familiar with how substantial a part of Ontario's housing mix co-ops really are. There are currently more than 550 non-profit housing co-operatives in the province, which add up to a total of 44,109 households in which more than 125,000 people live.

I mentioned this in my questions and comments yesterday after the minister and the parliamentary assistant did their leadoff, and MPPs will be interested to know that there are housing co-ops in 95 of the 107 ridings. So it's a debate that hits very close to home and affects 90% of members of provincial Parliament in this House.

In my riding of Leeds–Grenville, I'm very proud to represent two of these co-ops. Both are in the city of Brockville. The Brock-Seaway Housing Co-op is located on Dana Street, and the Shepherd's Green Co-operative Homes is on Liston Avenue. If you spend any time visiting, as I have, these 30-unit co-ops, you'll find that they're extremely lively neighbourhoods—and I can tell you they're a great place to live, and that a great mix of families call them home. I want to just congratulate the people at Brock-Seaway and Shepherd's Green for being such a part of what makes that city a vibrant community.

We all know that, even in the best circumstances and in the best accommodations, there are going to be issues that arise with some landlord-tenant relationships, issues that can't be resolved by the two parties. So it's welcome that we're seeing Bill 65 ensure that those issues will no longer be dealt with in the courts.

I mentioned earlier that there are some glaring problems with Ontario's Landlord and Tenant Board as it currently operates. In fact, if there's any issue I have with Bill 65, it's that I have serious doubts of the process that co-ops and members are going to find waiting for them after this bill is passed. That's because the board is hardly a model of efficiency in action; in reality, it's quite the opposite.

While I'm attending events in my riding, a weekend doesn't go by that I don't at least have one person who is a landlord talk to me about issues. I had it just on Sunday. I was at an event and a landlord stopped and told me some horror stories about what they've had to go through. These aren't owners of large multi-unit buildings; they're the small three- or four-unit, which is really the vast majority of landlords in the province, who I accept and I believe are really the backbone of the rental housing sector in this province.

More and more, they're coming forward to express frustrations that they experience at the board, whether they were to collect back rent or in fact to evict a problem tenant. In fact, many of them are telling me they're so fed up that they're considering getting out of the business altogether. I can tell you these are the landlords that we need to keep. They're landlords who provide great accommodations, are quick to address any problem that arises and have an absolute respect for their tenants.

Now, I know that members in this place have probably all read stories from the Toronto Star's tenant-from-hell series. Those articles told the story of a North York landlord who spent nearly a year battling with the Landlord and Tenant Board, trying to evict his nightmare tenant.

I want to quote an interesting line from a recent Toronto Star article, because I think it's enlightening, in part for what it says, but more for its source. The Star said its coverage of this tenant-from-hell story shows "how

easily tenants can manipulate the provincially funded Landlord and Tenant Board, using protections designed to avoid unfair evictions to stay in properties rent-free." That's the Toronto Star, not exactly the mouthpiece for landlords in the province of Ontario. So when the Toronto Star is using language like this, I think most of us will acknowledge that there is a problem here.

This was an extreme case that was in the story, but the problems that are in those stories are similar to stories that I'm hearing in my own riding of Leeds–Grenville. As I said, it's a rare opportunity that I would go a week in my riding without having a landlord of some type express to me his or her frustration. I've had landlords like Mike Gordon come into my office with pictures showing me thousands of dollars in damages that tenants have willfully done to his property. Yet he takes this evidence to the board and he finds that the deck is stacked against him and that there are roadblocks at every turn.

Mike isn't the only landlord who has talked to me about them, about how difficult it is to get an order from the board, and then, when they're fortunate enough to actually get one, how impossible it is to actually enforce. Where is the legislation to deal with this issue, from the government opposite? How come we can't have that type of reform and that type of discussion between landlords and tenants in the province of Ontario?

In debating another bill that the government put forward on housing, Bill 19, I mentioned one of the good guys, who is a landlord in my riding, Ted Carr. He has been providing housing in Brockville for decades. I know he tries very, very hard to treat his tenants fairly and to accommodate them even when they're late for their rent. Like any good landlord, he realizes it's better to work with tenants to resolve any issues, including rent arrears, than to face the dreaded alternative of a trip to the Landlord and Tenant Board. That just creates animosity between the two parties, and ultimately, at the end of the day, it leaves him with an empty unit to try to get a tenant for. As much as he tries to be fair, though, inevitably there are going to be disputes, and some are going to be ending up at the board.

I want to capture, in Ted's own words, the experience that it's like for a small landlord, and his perspective, because I think it bears repeating: "I have, and continue to have, money outstanding from a tenant, this after many requests for payment, different hearings and appearing at different levels of the system, the bureaucracy, getting several judgments, yet I still have money outstanding.

"Not many have the time, the patience or the resources to litigate these matters. It is the opinion of this landlord that the system, which has seen benefits over the years, has to be simplified, the process more friendly.... One has no idea until they experience this bureaucracy from a person with no idea of where to start, the frustration of where to turn or what to do now. To go to the tribunal to be turned away because of an incorrect process, incorrect form served, to hear that the tenant has access to duty counsel, while the landlord has no support." That's his quote.

Ted is among the many landlords asking me why the government can't take a look at the obvious problems that exist with the board and come up with something that's simpler and more streamlined. What we need is a process that works for both sides and one that really tries to do what the board was intended to do in the first place, and that's resolve disputes. Instead, our current system gets bogged down in procedural matters and bureaucratic delays that only perpetuate the original complaint.

0930

Rather than sorting these conflicts out, I believe the atmosphere at Landlord and Tenant Board hearings makes things worse. I think if the minister really wants to get an understanding of just how much of a struggle it is for a landlord to recover back rent or be compensated for property damage, she should go through the process herself. If she did, I suspect she might be a little more motivated to press for some long-overdue changes to that system.

Having reviewed the details of Bill 65 and provided some background on housing co-ops in the province, I think it's easy to understand why I wish the government would have dealt with those changes in the proposed legislation a lot earlier. Had we done that, perhaps the minister would be coming forward today with a plan to create more housing co-operatives in the province of Ontario. That's the piece of legislation that I'd prefer to sit here and debate this morning. Sadly, though, we're not seeing that type of ambitious agenda from this government or this minister. Instead, time and time again, we're seeing bills like this come forward.

Yes, our party is going to support Bill 65 in the big picture. It's really some housekeeping and should have been part of a much larger plan of action by the present Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, but that's not what we're seeing, Speaker. We don't need some relatively straightforward housekeeping bill. We need some initiatives that are more than just window dressing—and that's what our caucus calls bills like this: window dressing. They've got a great-sounding bill. They've got a great headline. They make for some great publicity. But really, in the whole scheme of things, they're just window dressing. So we need to have a far more substantive action plan on housing in the province of Ontario.

It reminds me, Speaker, when you look at some of these shell bills, of that old TV commercial: "Where's the beef?" It's all filler. We need some more substantive policy.

Look at the bill we gave third reading for yesterday, Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act. When you deal with a bill where a senior needs \$10,000 at the max to barely even cover the HST that the government has imposed on the renovations, it's hardly a benefit.

There's also Bill 30 we passed, the Family Caregiver Leave Act. Actually, when the minister was asked by our critic, the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, who they consulted with the bill, she actually looked at him and said, "No one."

When you look at some of these bills where there's no consultation and it's just a shell bill to grab a headline, it's ridiculous. We've seen it with our own Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We saw it with her other housing bill that was passed in the spring session, Bill 19, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act. When it was introduced, we heard the government taking a lot of time talking about Bill 19—that it was going to be the panacea. It was going to be a piece of legislation that was finally going to make life more affordable for tenants in the province of Ontario.

The reality, as we said from the time that Bill 19 was tabled, turned out to be something much different. This bill won't build any new affordable housing and it won't make life affordable for Ontario families. That's what we said when we debated Bill 19, and I'm pleased to now say that I have some evidence to back up those statements. This was the first year that act, Bill 19, was used in calculating the rent increase guideline. So we're all waiting for the annual announcement in August to find out what sort of impact the minister's legislation would have. We were so anxious to discover the real difference it would make for the lives of tenants.

Well, Speaker, the savings amounted to one tenth of a percentage point. That's right. Thanks to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the average Ontario tenant household will have an extra loonie in their pocket every month. It's true. The government's big plan for affordable housing will save money and give somebody renting a typical two-bedroom apartment in Ontario \$1 per month.

Times are tough, and I know people are counting pennies, so every little bit helps. But I have to tell you, since August, I haven't had any tenants calling my office to say how much they appreciate the government's efforts.

I have to give the minister credit. She'll probably say I'm being a little too negative by saying tenants are only saving \$1 a month, so I'm going to try to put a more positive spin on it, Speaker. It's \$12 a year; they get to save \$12 a year. I hope that the government members realize I tried my best to put a positive spin on that for her. I hope she feels that it sounded a little better.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Is that before or after they put on the HST?

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, that's a good question, to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. In a few moments, I'm going to get to a good bill that you put forward, because certainly that dollar a month isn't going to do anything to cover the cost of a tenant's skyrocketing hydro bill.

I want to remind that under this government, hydro rates have been increased eight times since 2003—84%. If you were a family that had one of those smart meters, it was a 150% increase. Part of the reason for that increase in our hydro rates, as we all know, was the cost to cover the minimum \$650 million under the government's scandalous decision to cancel the power plants in Mississauga and Oakville, to save a few seats.

But, ironically, there was a bill that was passed in this Legislature that would have given those family budgets

the relief they deserved on their hydro bill, and that was from the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. I had a great chat with him last evening at one of the receptions here. It was when, on November 24, the Progressive Conservative and New Democratic caucuses stood united to pass Bill 4, the Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act, for the HST rebate on home heating.

With that famous vote of 54-50, we showed that residents of the province deserved a break on their HST, to improve their home heating costs. That's the initiative, not Bill 19. That Bill 4 would have been the initiative to provide a relief for families. But it didn't suit the government's agenda. It did not suit the government's agenda, so they committed that that bill would go nowhere, even though the will of the majority of members in this Legislature felt that it was a priority. It was a sad day for democracy in the province of Ontario.

My colleagues and I in the PC caucus, throughout the debate of Bill 19, talked about it as window dressing. I think the facts have borne that out, with that dollar-a-month increase that people were going to get. Only a government that was that adrift, in the face of so many housing issues, would have tabled Bill 19.

I have to quote something from the previous critic for our party: my friend, the former member for Burlington, Joyce Savoline. As critic for municipal affairs and housing for our party, one of her bold ideas that she talked about in this place was the creation of a housing benefit. It's an idea that poverty advocates, a cross-section of the housing industry, as well as tenant and landlord organizations have supported.

We know the government has ruled out this idea. It hasn't even been on their legislative agenda. But I think something like that, and a discussion about that type of initiative, would be good for the three parties to engage in. It's really something that I think we should all turn our minds to, and it would be a much stronger piece of public policy to discuss.

To be fair, the government did take a shot at it. They created the ROOF program, rental opportunities for Ontario families. But they have a bit of a habit that they sometimes make criteria in these programs so restricted that—it really didn't have the impact on families that it could have. Like the examples I cited earlier, this was another attempt for positive press, but again, it didn't measure up to all the hype that it had before. Instead of working with the many groups interested in the idea of a housing benefit, the government went for a quick fix and a quick hit on the news cycles.

I want to refer the current minister to a report entitled *A Housing Benefit for Ontario: One Housing Solution for a Poverty Reduction Strategy*. I'm sure that the minister is familiar with the report. There were so many diverse groups that came together to produce it. They included the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, the Greater Toronto Apartment Association, the Daily Bread Food Bank, the Metcalf Foundation and the Atkinson Charitable Foundation.

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The housing benefit can be a targeted solution, the temporary lending of a hand until the recipient's economic circumstances improve. Again, if people know they don't have to worry about having a roof over their heads, they can make better decisions about improving their prospects for the future. It's really, I believe, an effective way to break the cycle of poverty, and I would really wish that we could engage in that type of debate.

Consider, too, that it would allow people to access some of the more than 20,000 vacant rental units that exist in Ontario right now, even as people are in a state of desperation for housing. We know this government has no plan that will get a sufficient number of new housing units built, so why not explore this approach and take advantage of some of the existing housing supply? As I said during debate on one of the previous government bills, I think it would show that the minister was serious about the housing problem, and I think there would be great potential for us to have a discussion on that strategy. We can do it without increasing spending by reallocating how funds are spent now.

The housing benefit study examined existing shelter support programs and found that they are inefficient, ineffective and, for too many Ontarians, nonexistent. Worse, the system is actually a disincentive for people trying to break the cycle of poverty by seeking employment. We all know that any income will trigger a loss of benefits and suddenly put them back in that unsustainable living situation.

As the housing benefit report stated, it examined—I just want to quote it for you now:

"Unpaid rent and its consequences also affect costs for governments and landlords. For landlords, the costs include: rent that they cannot recover; time spent filing applications with a housing tribunal; and time delays in finding new tenants. For government, there are administrative costs in dealing with eviction and in programs such as rent banks that provide temporary help to" those "in arrears. There are also the costs of legal aid and temporary shelters for those who are evicted for not paying their rent."

Unfortunately, with this government lurching from crisis to crisis, from scandal to scandal—they're too busy coming up with wedge bills or window dressing to deal with the problem. So I suspect that, like a lot of problems in Ontario, real change won't come until we change the folks on the other side.

I spoke earlier about the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, which has been a champion for the reforms proposed in this bill that we're debating today. The Ontario region of the CHFC was also the co-author of a report issued during the last provincial election campaign in September 2011. That report, entitled *Where's Home?*, outlined the very real need for politicians to focus on creating new affordable housing spaces.

I'm enlightened to use some of the details in that report to measure the current minister's performance. The need was particularly acute in the part of the province

where I come from, in eastern Ontario. Vacancy rates in the region were among the lowest in the province—three times lower, in fact, than the 3% figure that's considered a healthy retail housing market. Harvey Cooper, who was here yesterday, of the CHFC, noted in a news release, "This year's findings clearly demonstrate that the gap between homeowners' and tenants' incomes is growing ever wider and many Ontarians of low and modest means are struggling to find a home that they can afford ... I worry about families being forced to choose between paying for the necessities of life, putting food on the table and paying the rent."

Twelve months later, thanks to this government continually opting to kick the can down the road rather than roll up their sleeves and get to work, the picture isn't any better for households across the province. In fact, I'd argue that the situation has actually worsened. Equally disturbing is that the number of families that find themselves in such a desperate situation grows every single day.

That same report also notes that in order to keep up with the growing demand, Ontario needs to see 10,000 new affordable housing units built each year. Again, I want to ask the minister how much progress she is making on that aspect of the affordable housing problem. Put aside the spin and do-nothing bills like Bill 19, that she put up before. The statistics speak for themselves.

What we know is that there were 156,358 households waiting for affordable, rent-gear-to-income housing at the end of last year. This number has increased every single year for the past five years, and it rose 2.9% in 2011, on the heels of a staggering 7% increase in 2010. Sadly, the need cuts across all demographic groups, including the 56,130 families with children who are stuck on those waiting lists.

The latest report from ONPHA also underlines that there is a growing need for adequate housing for seniors. Twenty-five per cent of those on waiting lists are seniors.

As I stated, we need 10,000 new housing units every single year, to try to meet the need. This isn't happening. As ONPHA clearly states in its report, "New affordable housing is not being built in sufficient quantity to meet the growing demand, and, in many cases, the rents for these units are not affordable to households on waiting lists without an additional subsidy.

"Municipalities now have responsibility for the planning and delivery of affordable housing options in their communities, and a local commitment to affordable housing is vital to addressing the shortage. But municipalities do not have the resources to do this alone."

Strip away all the rhetoric from the affordable housing discussion, and we discover that on this watch of this government, waiting lists are growing every single year. In fact, the waiting list has grown by 26%, or over 32,000 households, since 2007, and the numbers are up across all individuals—families, seniors, single parents. In my riding, the waiting list for families alone is 500 people.

When we talk about the waiting lists, we need to understand how long they can be and how long it can

take a family or an individual to get off of them. Overall, wait-lists can be as short as one month or as long as 10 years.

Looking at the average wait in 2011, we see the following: that seniors spent two and a half years on the waiting list; non-senior singles and couples, 3.4 years; families, 2.3 years. That's far too long waiting for a safe and secure home, which we know is the foundation that everyone needs for a successful and fulfilling life.

It's not going to change until this government gets serious about resolving the problem. Until then, we'll be stuck in this terrible situation that we have now, where for every household that gets off the waiting list, three more get on.

While those on the waiting lists are clearly the men, women and children who are suffering the most, we know the problems don't end there. Even those fortunate enough to have a roof over their heads are desperately struggling to hold things together. Provincially, we know that some 20% of tenant households spend more than 50% of their income on rent. Additionally 32% are in core need, meaning that their current accommodation fails to meet standards of adequacy, suitability and, of course, affordability. That 32% figure represents a staggering 630,000 households. It's estimated that 1.5 million Canadians live in substandard housing today. Those are depressing numbers, Speaker.

When you look at the issue we're debating here, people need to understand that the reality out there is far different than the picture that the government paints for us every day. Day after day, their members shuffle in here and take their seats over there and wait for their moment to stand up to defend the indefensible. Whether it's the power plant scandal, our economy, our fiscal situation or our debate today on housing, the government members are all on their feet, telling Ontarians all is well. I think they're in complete denial over there. Honestly, I have to wonder how we can continue with debates like we're having today.

We need to have a different plan from the government on this file. We have a government that has run out of gas. They're coasting, and we can see it every day. We look at their lack of engagement, their lack of debate on simple bills day after day. We all know, Speaker, that they have no plan over there. They're lurching from one scandal, one crisis to the next, desperately doing whatever it takes to cling to power just that little bit longer.

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Over the past week we've seen proof of it with the scandal, the mountains of documents that were given on the power plant scandal, thousands that were either redacted or completely whited out. The fact is that the power plant scandals affect every single bill we talk about. Look at Bill 65; think of the affordable housing that could have been created in this province with \$650 million that was squandered for a political decision. It just shows this government's complete mismanagement of the energy sector.

There must be a reason why successful Ministers of Housing have failed so completely when it comes to the

critical issue of creating more housing stock. I think the real reason is the fact that this government can't deliver. We need to start looking at the waiting lists, and we need to look at working across party lines.

It's just utter mismanagement of the finances of this province that have put us in this area. There's no money that this government is offering municipalities for making repairs to their rapidly deteriorating stock of social housing. The backlog of repairs now sits at \$3 billion, and the government is still not offering sufficient funds.

I think all Ontarians recognize that this province is in a dire financial situation. I'm not really sure the average person would understand how dire it is. Take a look at Ontario's annual operating deficit, the amount of money we spend in this province above what we take in; many people know that it's about \$13 billion. Now that's bad, and people certainly expect better of their government. Let's talk about just how bad it is. Consider this: Ontario's 2011 deficit was actually twice as big as every other province combined. That definitely puts the McGuinty government in a league of its own. It's really quite an accomplishment, especially when, on their watch, they've actually seen government revenue increase by \$35 billion annually.

The problem is that as good as this government is at taking money out of taxpayers' pockets, unfortunately, they are even better at spending it. That's why we're taking in \$35 billion more every year while this government is spending \$45 billion more on an annual basis. You don't need a degree in math to figure out that that's not a sustainable way to run a government.

But they do add up to one thing for sure, and that's the fact that Ontario, on this government's watch, has become a have-not province. All that red ink doesn't look bad on paper and doesn't just give MPPs cause for concern; the citizens of Ontario need to understand that this has a real connection to the services that they care about. When we carry a huge deficit and a debt that's on track to hit \$411 billion, it's a huge drain on the resources we have to put forward for things that we invest in, things like health, education and, of course, affordable housing.

Remember that the interest on the debt alone is \$10.1 billion. That would make the ministry of debt servicing the third-largest portfolio after health and education. Certainly, one could do a lot for affordable housing with \$10 billion, looking at the existing housing stock that municipalities have to deal with, and the fact that \$3 billion of it is in desperate need of repairs. Every percentage point that we have a jump in interest rates adds \$500 million in debt servicing costs. That's crazy; that's an unsustainable fiscal model that this government has put forward. They can't continue to ignore it. They can't continue to kick the can down the road.

We've all got ideas on what to do, and I'm sure that the third party, when they do their lead for Bill 65, will have a number of ideas that they want to put forward on how to add to the housing market.

I'm glad that Harvey's here from the federation. Welcome back. I gave you another plug for your lobby day on October 17.

I also want to take this opportunity to recognize the fact that they've done such a great job in doing their work. I mentioned earlier in debate that this bill coincides with the International Year of Cooperatives, as declared by the UN. I think it's a great opportunity for us to celebrate and acknowledge the important role that co-ops play in so many aspects of our communities, including the housing sector. We know that there are some 1,300 different co-ops operating in Ontario today, serving their members and their communities well. Indeed, as the UN slogan for the year states, "Cooperative Enterprises Build a Better World." We can see so many examples of that on display every day across Ontario, in everything from housing to banking and agriculture. The UN Secretary-General observed the following: "Co-operatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility." I suggest this is a particularly accurate description of the values we find at the core of co-op housing and why we need to ensure it remains a vital part of Ontario's affordable housing strategy.

Again, I want to take this opportunity to commend the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. It was great to have representatives here in the House yesterday. Harvey is here, and I'm glad that he's here. I hope that he has a chance to talk to some members about his organization, and as I mentioned in my brief remarks, I'm looking forward again to seeing them later on in October for their lobby day.

As we know, the UN declared 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives, and the co-op housing federation has done something special this year. They've declared 2012 to be the Year of Getting Management Right. Speaker, I can't resist saying I wish that the McGuinty government would do the same, would do the same as what Harvey is talking about: getting the management right. Maybe they can get some advice from our friends from the federation when they come for a visit later this month. Ontarians would be a lot better off if the McGuinty government would get management of the province of Ontario right.

Dedicating a year like that, and their unwavering commitment to co-op housing residents, some 125,000 who live in the province, is commendable. I'm so impressed with the federation, while reviewing their website, to see a comprehensive tool kit that they've developed to help co-ops become 2020 co-ops. The plan sets out five standards required to become a good 2020 co-op: (1) a mission statement and a vision for the future; (2) good governance and a principled leadership; (3) sound management; (4) a long-term plan; and (5) a commitment to environmental sustainability.

I think anyone reviewing this tool kit will quickly see how forward-thinking and innovative our housing co-ops are. They're committed to evolving in a way that ensures they will continue to serve the needs of their residents and meet the challenges posed by our changing economic and social climate. That ability to adapt is fundamental in any successful organization. And I wanted to make sure I

took a few minutes while Harvey was here—I'm glad I saw him in the gallery—to compliment the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada for demonstrating such leadership.

Speaker, I found it a bit ironic, though, yesterday to hear in the debate both the minister and her parliamentary assistant looking for some support from this side of the House in their efforts to lobby the federal government for affordable housing funding. I have to say it's a bit ironic, because Ontario municipalities have been telling the McGuinty government it needs to step up to the plate, that the McGuinty government should step up and do more for a long-term affordable housing plan that municipalities have in their lap.

Yesterday, we heard from the government, saying, "Hey, don't blame us. It's the folks in Ottawa whose fault it is." We all know that this government made its plan—its plan—completely dependent on federal funding at a time when, I suggest, the feds were crystal clear that they were getting out of the business of housing.

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If there's one thing that I know about the McGuinty government, it's that it's pretty quick to throw a stone at the federal government whenever they want. I'm not just talking about in this Legislature, but also in question period. They blame the feds for not giving them the cash.

I'm sure, if anything goes wrong with the delivery of the housing plan, they'll blame their municipal partners too, because we all know that the McGuinty government's long-term affordable housing program puts the onus entirely—entirely—on Ontario's municipalities to do all the heavy lifting. Municipal service managers are the ones working hard to develop the 10-year plans with objectives and targets. They even have to come up with a mechanism to measure their progress. Now, I'm all for ensuring that municipalities have their voice, but this plan, the government's plan, puts everything—everything—on the shoulders of municipalities and does so with no funds to offset the administration costs, let alone give them funding to have predictability in trying to meet those housing targets.

If there's a government that needs to step up and do its job, it's the McGuinty government that needs to step up. So with all due respect to the minister and the parliamentary assistant, the member for York West, I'm going to confine my lobbying efforts to the McGuinty government.

Just in closing, when we—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a surprise? What? Again, you'll have lots of opportunity to provide comments.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm glad you're so engaged today. I'm glad you're so engaged.

When we measure growth in average weekly earnings across Canada, between March 2011 and March of this year, the results, I suggest, were nothing short of embarrassing for this province. Where did we finish? Dead last, 10th out of 10. Saskatchewan led the way with a 5.9%

increase in weekly incomes. Nova Scotia was ninth at 2%. Ontario was basically stagnant, with a measly 0.1% monthly increase. That's not the province that I'm from, Speaker. That's not the province that I want us to be from.

We need to do better. We need to have a better plan. We've got essentially nothing from this government. They've failed. Their formula for success isn't working for Ontarians, whether they want to own their home, whether they want to rent from a private landlord or whether they want to live in a non-profit housing co-operative.

The McGuinty government has had nine years to get it right, and instead of getting better, things are getting worse in the province of Ontario. We're falling deeper into debt, and we're continuing to lag behind the rest of Canada on just about every single economic measure you want to use.

I welcome Bill 65, and our party is going to support this piece of legislation. But this bill and our support for it don't change the fact that Ontario is on the wrong track under this government. Only the Ontario PC Party has bold ideas that will get this province back on track.

Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me this wonderful hour to talk about Bill 65. I appreciate the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I listened intently to the member's lead-in on this bill, and I'm thrilled to hear the Conservatives talking about affordable housing. I'm not here to knock them. I'm here to congratulate them, because I think that effort needs to continue, and it needs to continue across this House. So don't get me wrong on my statements: We all need to be talking about affordable housing.

I'd also like to welcome Harvey here on behalf of the government relations from co-ops.

The work that co-ops do in our province is so important. I know in Hamilton, I have some great co-ops, and they have wonderful initiatives. Being environmental—I have a co-op that has solar panels, high-efficiency furnaces, new floors, appliances—all of this coming from the great work that co-ops do. It's initiatives like this that not only show concern for our environment, but it's also generating income for them. If we have initiatives like this going forward, that the government's bringing, that are going to be saving co-ops money, then more co-ops across this province can be doing these initiatives because they'll have more funds in their banks to be bringing initiatives forward like that.

I would like to congratulate the co-op in my riding that has just celebrated its 20th anniversary, and that would be Stoneworth Co-operative. I have many co-ops that I'm supportive of in our riding, but I'm looking forward to these changes coming forward. I know that we on this side of the House will definitely be supporting this.

We do have a little concern, though, I'd have to say, Mr. Speaker, and it's about the appeals process. We would like to see that tenants would be able to use that

appeals process also, not just landlords and the co-ops. We know that the tenants need to have a voice. The procedure, the way that's set up through the co-op housing, is the backbone of it, and we'd like to see that continue. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: This is truly a historic day. For the first time in 17 years, the Conservatives are talking about affordable housing. Let's just deal with history. What is the first thing that Mike Harris did, before he even cut the welfare by 22%? He cancelled every affordable housing project, every affordable housing—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I see someone's touched a button. I believe that when I'm standing, you're not talking, and I believe that goes for the member for Leeds–Grenville especially. He's answering your presentation.

By the way, stop the clock.

I would suggest that we give the Attorney General an opportunity to respond. You may not like what he hears—but I can't even hear him. Thank you.

Continue.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Mike Harris, for the record, cancelled every affordable housing project that was on the books then or ready to go, which cost this province and the taxpayers of this province millions and millions of dollars. Number two, the only consultation Mike Harris ever had—and he openly admitted it in the House here; he would always say, “We had our consultation on election day.” So let's just remind them of that.

The last affordable housing program that we had in the province of Ontario was as a result of an agreement that I had the privilege to sign on behalf of my government in 2005, with the then federal government led by Paul Martin, for some \$720 million worth of a joint affordable housing project that created over 10,000 units. Why has there been nothing built since then? Because the Harper government is not even interested in talking about affordable housing or putting up their half of the money, which is the way affordable housing has usually been financed. Yes, we need affordable housing. I've been involved in this business for over 40 years at the municipal non-profit level. I've built non-profit projects etc. It's great to see that in the Conservative Party, all of the Red Tories aren't quite dead yet. Fight for this within your caucus, because it's the first time in 17 years that we've heard any comments from the Conservatives about affordable housing at all. Welcome.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's my pleasure to say I support this bill. It's a very worthwhile initiative. It's trying to streamline the process of solving disputes among tenants and co-operatives. That's a noble idea and makes great sense. It's appalling to see that \$1 million is spent on dispute-solving in courts, when something simple like this could be solved at the landlord-tenancy board.

It's a pleasure to see that the government is so concerned about efficiencies and cost savings, when they were not too concerned about \$650 million that was wasted recently and caused great turmoil and commotion in the House; it was such an unpleasant thing and a waste of time for all of us. We had Ornge scandals, we had eHealth etc.

I applaud the government on this great initiative. It's going to help people. It would be nice if they went even a little bit further. There is a need for greater housing, as my colleague from Leeds–Grenville pointed out. Again, some of the \$650 million that was wasted could have been spent that way to truly help people who are standing there in need, and that should have been done. I'll close on those words, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to say “great presentation” to the member for Leeds–Grenville. I, as well, enjoyed our discussions that we had last night. It was really nice to actually have that conversation with you, to get to know you, and I look forward to having those types of conversations with everybody in this House. We sometimes have different perceptions of what we think to what individuals actually do and how things are done in their riding. It's nice to see that—again, I just want to say I appreciate the discussion that we had last night.

Again, I appreciate the support that the Conservative caucus gave to my private member's bill, because removing the HST would actually be a very big savings for individuals back home. It would be a very big step forward in making life a little bit more affordable for them.

Now back to this bill: The one thing it does do is that it will improve the speed in regard to how these conflicts, these issues, these concerns get dealt with, and it's going to provide an efficient resolution mechanism in order to do that. But by doing that, there are some fundamental problems that we need to really address, where this bill doesn't do that, and that is providing actual affordable housing for individuals in Ontario. That is really the white elephant in this bill, that it doesn't actually implement those things.

There are benefits to it, and I want to commend the Liberal government. This was one of their messages that they've been on record talking about since 2007. We're in 2012. Why did it take five years to actually do something positive and get this going? I'm not sure. But I'm going to enjoy hearing the debate about this particular bill as we move forward.

There are benefits for individuals, organizations and the co-ops throughout this bill. I look forward to hearing the debate about that, and I look forward to presenting my comments to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Leeds–Grenville has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain, the Attorney General, the member for Algoma–Manitoulin and also my eastern Ontario

brother, the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills. I want to thank you for your comments.

I was a little disappointed with the Attorney General—I have to be honest—with his comments. I've known him for years, and I just wish he wouldn't focus on the past. I just wish he would focus on the future. Actually, I hoped he would stand up and basically denounce a casino in Kingston that would cripple the town of Gananoque. I hoped he would denounce that today in the House but, unfortunately, he didn't.

I do want to thank the members for their comments. I honestly do believe that when we have a bill, even though it doesn't create the new housing stock that is so desperately needed in the province, there should be some mechanism so that we can, in good faith, look at our proponents and be able to have a legislative agenda that we can actually tell them and be able to say that this bill has some political will, that we'll be able to transcend, create committees, have some public hearings, deal with some amendments. And I appreciate that the New Democrats have got some ideas about some changes. I'm sure Ms. Forster, when she does her lead, will talk about that.

I think we have to have an adult discussion, at some point, regarding housing issues in the province. We've seen to date, with this bill—it's a very minor consensus bill; everybody agrees. Bill 19 just didn't cut it. I know I walked out this morning and saw a gentleman, Cal, who I see pretty regularly here at Queen's Park. They need better out of this government. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to once again welcome the family and friends of page Jenna Rutherford to Queen's Park. In the gallery today are her mother, Carolyn Rutherford, and her aunts Marilyn Vandenberg and Lisa Pirie. With them are a number of Jenna's friends from East Oxford Central Public School in Norwich township: Jolanda Laan, Abby Grass, Annet Laan, Kristy Langeveld, Joelle Sinnige, Sabine Sinnige, Melissa Sinnige and Emily Wilker. I want to welcome all of them to Queen's Park and take this opportunity to thank Jenna for all her hard work in her tenure here at Queen's Park.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to welcome to the Legislature today Mr. Paul Street. He is the father of page Maggie Street from my wonderful riding of Mississauga–Erindale. Maggie is actually the captain of the pages today. I really want to extend him a very warm welcome.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to welcome to the west members' gallery Elaine Fusciardi and Leo Fusciardi. They are the parents of my page from Thornhill, Roberto

Fusciardi, who is the page captain today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to introduce Carol Anne Boothby, who is the mother of page Christina Boothby, who is joining us today. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to be here yesterday, but Chief Boothby, her grandfather and a former chief of police, was here as well, along with other members of the family. So we're thrilled to have her mom with us today.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my pleasure to recognize two guests from my riding of Durham, Mr. Mike Slocombe and a good friend of his, Mervyn Thomas, from London, England. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I would just like to recognize a birthday, Mr. Peter Tabuns's, today, and to wish him a happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will pause for the rousing rendition of Happy Birthday—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No! Rule it out of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome members of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association here today. Billy Cheung is with us, the chair, and Dennis Darby, the CEO; along with other members of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association board. They are at Queen's Park today for their Queen's Park Day. They're hosting a reception at 5 o'clock in the dining room. Come say thank you to the pharmacists for the great work they do.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to also introduce the most trusted profession, voted continually, the pharmacists of Ontario. In particular, Phil Hauser is here visiting. He came to Queen's Park earlier this year, and he's back again. Thanks for coming, guys.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to welcome Marita Tonkin from my riding. She is the chief of pharmacy practice at the Hamilton Health Sciences and is here with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association this morning. Welcome.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome from my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, Darryl Moore, past chairman of the OPA and the owner of a number of pharmacies in Sarnia–Lambton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to welcome Maria del Mar and Sarah Manninen, part of the ACTRA contingent visiting Queen's Park today. Welcome.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine, Mike Cavanagh, who's also a board member of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association here with us today and co-owner of Kawartha Lakes Pharmasave in Lindsay, and he's also a member of the City of Kawartha Lakes Family Health Team—a very busy man. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to introduce a pharmacist from my riding. His name is Carlo Berardi. He owns two pharmacies in Nickel Belt and is the vice-chair of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association and is about to become the chair.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Actually, I'd like to correct the record for the member from Nickel Belt. Carlo Berardi—and we welcome him to Sudbury—is a constituent in the riding of Sudbury who owns businesses in Nickel Belt, and we would like to welcome him warmly to Queen's Park. I look forward to meeting him this afternoon.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to recognize a very special constituent of mine, Peter Zakarow, on his 80th birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I would like a point of order, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing, and I'm beating you to the punch.

Today, I would like to acknowledge a guest in the Speaker's gallery, led by the member from Leeds—Grenville. We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from Russia visiting with MPPs. Leading the delegation is the Minister of Culture, Galina Syrovatka; the Minister of Industry and Energy, Oleg Polyakov; the Director of the State Establishment of Culture, Nikolay Syrovatka; and the rest of the delegation. We're glad that you're here with us today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in a ruling made by the Speaker on September 13, he told the Minister of Energy to provide all of the documents related to your government's decision to cancel the Mississauga and Oakville power plants. Mr. Speaker, as you no doubt know, this House has yet to receive all of those documents.

Despite the Liberal House leader's claim that "absolutely nothing was redacted," the member from Nipissing has shown that page after page was blanked out or redacted. Will the Premier now obey the Speaker's ruling and produce those documents so that the people of Ontario can find out what their \$650-million purchase bought them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We're going to have a chance—I know we'll have a chance—at committee to address these issues, but the request by the committee and the ruling by the Speaker was worked on by ministry officials and the OPA. Thousands of documents have been provided. My understanding of the approach is that nothing relevant to the gas plant issues was taken out; it's as simple as that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is directed back to the Premier. Premier, both you and the Minister of Energy are lawyers, and you know that if a court orders the production of documents, they have to be produced—period, no question. The Speaker's ruling is no different;

it's clear and unequivocal. In the end, the Speaker stated that the minister had an obligation to comply with the committee's call for these documents.

Premier, why have you abandoned your responsibility, both as a member of this House and as a lawyer, to comply with the rules of this House and comply with the order to report and produce all of the documents to the standing committee?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know we'll have a chance to discuss this and hear more at the committee, which this House has voted these issues go to. I know that the ministry and the Ontario Power Authority worked very hard to provide information—there are thousands of documents there—and they have done that.

This all stems from some very important issues and challenging issues about whether gas plants should proceed in Oakville and Mississauga. It was the position of all three parties in this House—all three parties in this House—that they should not. So we worked hard; we were able to obtain the relocation of those plants; we were able to obtain new agreements. I understand that the communities to which these plants are going are supportive of having these plants; they have energy expertise and they have workers prepared and ready to work.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement—

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again, I'll address my question to the Premier. The order to disclose those documents could not be more clear, and that's why the Minister of Energy has been found to be in contempt. You could have saved a good man's career by taking responsibility for your actions and disclosing all the documents.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

That is not an appropriate comment, and I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I withdraw.

Premier, you could have saved a good man's career by taking responsibility for your actions. Premier, why did you decide to act in your own self-interest and throw the Minister of Energy under the bus? Why don't you—

Interjections.

Mrs. Christine Elliott:—take responsibility for your own actions and not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: So the House—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will respond to some individuals in a moment when I have attention.

We're at a testy moment, and I believe that it's a test of you, not me, as to whether or not you can withhold your personal comments. I did hear a few personal com-

ments that I would offer a member to withdraw. At this time, I will continue, and now I'm moving into immediately—and I will be very quick to mention the individual by riding. I'd like to get through this.

I also want to make a point that's very important: The committee has been struck, and questions relating directly to the mandate of the committee will be questioned by me first to give you an opportunity to rephrase, if that's necessary, to government policy.

The committee has been struck. It is going to be charged with doing its job according to the motion, and I'll listen carefully—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll finish my sentence: I'll listen carefully to ensure that anything that should be directed to the committee will be directed to the committee.

Now we'll finish by asking the Minister of Energy to respond.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you, Speaker. I know the committee will have an opportunity to consider all of these issues. I know that the ministry and the OPA worked very hard on the documents. If there are specific issues about those documents, they'll address that—they did that.

I think the point is that the documents relate to certain decisions that we made, and governments don't always make easy decisions. Governments make decisions. We listened to the residents of Mississauga and Oakville. We made a decision not to proceed with gas plants in those two locations, two gas plants out of 17 that we've contracted. We made that decision. It happens to be a decision that was supported by both the PCs and the NDP, both of which had been very vocal in their position.

This government made a decision. This government—the cabinet, the caucus and the Premier—made this decision. We stand together on the decision. We always stand together to listen to the people that we're elected to represent.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday in this Legislature, by a vote of 53-50, your government was held accountable for the politically motivated decisions to cancel two power plants. But to anyone watching yesterday's events unfold, during your dog-and-pony show of a press conference and during question period, it was evident you don't understand the severity of your actions. Not only have you failed to produce a complete set of documents, you have failed to answer questions as to why those documents were tampered with, choosing instead to let the blame fall on the energy minister and the photocopier.

You have had every opportunity to take responsibility for the political decisions that you made, decisions that left your cabinet in the dark and your energy minister to find out about your politically motivated decisions in the newspaper.

Premier, how do you expect us to believe your dramatic defence of the energy minister when it was you who put him in that position in the first place?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it's hard for me to believe my ears. We begin with his question. Yesterday, yes, the House agreed that we should have a committee to look into this matter, and he has the gall to stand up here and talk as if the committee has held the hearings and the committee reached a conclusion. I think we should let the committee do its work. I think to stand up in the sort of spiteful, partisan way that he is and cast aspersions upon the Minister of Energy and other members of this crown and hold these hearings on the floor of the Legislature is beneath contempt.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that this was a complex situation, as your ruling put forward. We had two competing interests. The Minister of Energy did his best, and now this Legislature will be looking into it via a committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I don't actually think they heard the question. I asked why the Premier put the Minister of Energy in that job in the first place.

Premier, as you spoke yesterday, it was clear for all Ontarians to see the regret in your eyes. You hung your energy minister out to dry until the eleventh hour before finally choosing to publicly support him. I'm appalled that the Premier would be so self-righteous as to stand in a press conference yesterday and pretend to defend Chris Bentley when he has been the Premier's hand-picked fall guy from the moment he was handed the portfolio.

I'm appalled that this Premier would have the gall to accuse the opposition parties of playing politics when, for the past two years, he has done nothing but play politics, with over \$640 million of taxpayer money squandered.

Premier, if you really cared about your minister, would you stand up and take responsibility for your mistakes rather than make your fall guy take the blame? Will you do that today, Premier?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, how dare he? The fact of the matter is, I come from a world where someone is innocent until proven guilty. This member is standing up here in the Legislature, he is presupposing the work of a committee, and he is casting aspersions upon an honourable member of this House, the Minister of Energy.

He fails in his question to make reference to the fact that this government came forward with a compromise position that would have seen this matter looked at by the committee in a way that was fair and reasonable. What he did was, he stood up and stifled debate by moving closure in this Legislature. He would not allow our members to speak, and he would not allow us to move that amendment so that it could have a proper airing here.

Mr. Speaker, if anyone needs to apologize, it's that member for his attitude and for his approach.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Rob Leone: The government House leader is incorrect. I'm not casting aspersions on the energy minister; I'm casting them on the Premier.

Back to the Premier: You had every opportunity to step in months ago and take responsibility for this scandal on your poor energy minister. If the trembling in your voice and the concern on your face were sincere, it was because you buried a friend, a good man, in a political graveyard for your own selfish interests, and you realized it was far too late to save him.

You were faced with the choice of owning up to your actions and the actions of the Liberal campaign team. Instead, you decided that the minister's political future was worth less than your political legacy. You pull the strings on that side of the aisle, Premier; you make the decisions. If you had told your minister to release the documents, I'm sure he would have.

So, Premier, if you mean what you said yesterday, will you stand up and tell this Legislature that the energy minister was your fall guy and take responsibility for your selfish actions?

1050

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, over and over we came forward with a way to compromise, a way to co-operate, a way to make sure the documents were released, that they didn't jeopardize issues like solicitor-client privilege and commercial confidences. We came forward to this Legislature with an amendment to the motion which would have allowed for a reasonable charge to the committee to look into some very important issues about balancing public interest as well as the right of committees to see documents. And all this opposition did, not only this party but the New Democratic Party, was basically tell us to go fly a kite. They stand in this place and they say that honourable members of this House are guilty until proven innocent.

I think they have some apologizing to do to this Legislature, to the Minister of Energy and to the people of Ontario.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier asked for sympathy for his government as they faced a public shaming over the private power mess that they created in Oakville and Mississauga. I think the question on most people's minds is a pretty simple one: Has the Premier considered showing some sympathy for the families who will be paying the higher electricity bills as a result of their decisions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Families are first and foremost in our mind all the time. Businesses are important as well, because they employ those families. And we'll remember where we were in 2001, 2002, 2003 and, unfortunately, on the edge of our seats for several years after. We had brownouts, we had a blackout; we had a system that wasn't a reliable system. Businesses were

regularly asked to turn down their power use, throwing people out of work.

We've worked really hard over the past nine years to build a reliable system, to bring on the generation we need, so that when we had the hottest five months in Ontario's history, Ontario had enough power. It was reliable and it was almost entirely green.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary question?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, families are now paying the highest electricity bills in the country, and they're wondering when they'll get some sympathy from a government that's treated Ontario's electricity system like an extension of their campaign machine. People deserve answers, and they, like the Premier, know that the energy minister isn't the only one to blame.

Is the Premier of this province ready to show some leadership, accept some responsibility for these decisions and apologize to the people of Ontario, who will now be stuck paying even higher electricity bills?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I want to thank the NDP for their support on clean air. I know they know, as we all know, that burning coal, which was 25% of our energy use in 2003, not only caused thousands of illnesses but had a \$4-billion burden on our health care system paid by taxpayers. That should factor in. I know they know that the billions of dollars of debt accumulated by Ontario Hydro over the years was because the system had very expensive power, which was being paid for by taxpayers' families as well as ratepayers.

We've worked hard over the years to have reliable power, to have enough power. We brought in the clean energy benefit and we'll continue to have reliance and regard for families and businesses that have to pay the bills and make sure they get the clean energy that they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Completing my first series of questions to the Premier, Speaker: He likes to talk about making the tough decisions, this Premier does, but last year, he made the cynical ones and families are now paying the price. People are frustrated that the same government that tells them that times are tough, that tells them that money is tight, that tells them that they understand the struggle to pay the bills, was willing to spend hundreds of millions of dollars and hand it over to private power interests just to win a couple of seats.

If the Premier wants to protect the integrity of his energy minister, he can now show some leadership as the Premier of this province, step forward and take responsibility for this mess. Will he do that?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We've been very clear on this. In the case of Oakville and Mississauga, we listened to the residents. Could we have done a better job of getting the siting right in the first place? Absolutely—bringing together at an earlier stage the willing community and the needs of the electricity system. These were two of 17 gas plants of different sizes that we've sited.

But for the NDP to ascribe the motives to the decision makes one ask what their motives were for supporting the decision in the first place. I don't do that, but it makes one wonder what their motives were, because they supported that decision. The party opposite supported that decision.

I think we should all join together that the reason we supported the decision was that we listened to the residents, the people who elect us, determined it wasn't the right place for the plant, and worked hard to relocate it. That was our determination; it was the right decision.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is more about the needs of the Liberal Party than it is about the needs of the electricity system.

My next question is to the Premier. As the Premier well knows, yesterday's vote was to allow the finance committee to find out the real costs of the politically motivated cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants. This will give the Premier a chance to make it clear who made the decisions and where the responsibility actually lies. Is the Premier going to be willing to tell his side of the story if the committee actually asks him to do so?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I have every confidence that the Chair of the committee and the members of the committee will organize themselves. The committee will begin hearings, as outlined in the standing order. I'm going to let the committee undertake its work and decide how they want to examine this issue.

Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the third party wants to talk about stifling debate and wants to talk about discussion on this matter, then maybe she should stand in the House in her supplementary and explain why they voted against their principles on closure when they knew that we had dozens of members who wanted to speak on this issue, and, more importantly, a matter which I had made public and shared with her House leader, an amendment that we wanted to bring forward, which would have focused the committee's work and would have allowed it to come forward with the types of recommendations that would be of value to this Legislature and of value to committees as we move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the people who pay the bills in this province want to have some answers, and it's clear that the Premier is the one who should be providing them. Documents released from the Ontario Power Authority, the OPA, make it clear that the Premier's office was controlling all aspects of what was supposed to be an arm's-length decision. Is the Premier ready to tell the people of this province, the people who pay the bills, that the responsibility was his for this decision?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, it's always fun to go down memory lane here.

The leader of the third party, Hansard, October 18, 2010: "New Democrats actually have thought for a long time that that plant should never have been built and we've said so."

The member for Toronto–Danforth told Inside Halton: "I don't agree with the Oakville power plant; I don't think it's necessary."

The member for Beaches–East York, December 2: "I'm glad that the people of Oakville came to their senses. I'm glad the people of Oakville hired Erin Brockovich and did all the things that they did in order to have this killed."

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, all three parties agreed that these two gas plants should not go forward. The issue before committee, Mr. Speaker, was balancing the public interest, the taxpayers' interest, with the rights of committee to see documents. That was the amendment that we put forward and that was the amendment that she and her colleagues stifled so that we could not have proper debate here in the Ontario Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, here's what people tell me is frustrating them. The government that promised to take the politics out of electricity and lower their rates is cutting sweetheart deals with private power companies that leave them paying the highest electricity costs in the entire country. The Premier, who promised—in fact, keeps promising—to make the tough decisions, is avoiding responsibility for a mess that he created. Is he ready to show some leadership and take some responsibility for this mess so that this kind of thing doesn't happen again?
1100

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, this is a little rich, coming from a party that itself has absolutely no energy plan. The fact of the matter is that all three parties in this Legislature were in agreement that the Oakville and Mississauga plants were a mistake. We've admitted that it was a mistake. We cancelled those plants. The minister went before the estimates committee and, as you yourself have ruled, there was a very complex matter: a balance between the public and the taxpayers' interests and the rights of committees to see documents.

The upshot of that, Mr. Speaker, was compromise after compromise that we put on the table in order to address this issue, and we were told by the opposition parties they had no interest in it. They had no interest in protecting the rights of taxpayers.

Now the matter will be looked at by a committee of this Legislature. I think we should allow the committee to look into the matter and to conduct its affairs and report back, and not prejudice what it's going to find.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Even yesterday the Premier was willing to support part of the motion that was before this House, and that was that a committee should be struck to look into this scandal. He

just avoided answering a question, a very straightforward question, from the leader of the third party: Will he agree to appear before that committee to answer for his actions regarding the decisions relating to this scandal?

The Premier refused to appear before the standing committee investigating the Ornge scandal, on two different occasions. I would like to know now from the Premier: Will he stand in his place, agree that he will appear before the finance committee and take responsibility for his role in this scandal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: You know, Mr. Speaker, the attitude of the opposition has been nothing short of outrageous. The fact of the matter is that we have a committee of the Legislature, which only recently—less than 24 hours ago—has been charged to look into this matter. I think we should allow the committee to do its work. I also think that we should not prejudge what that committee is going to do or find.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, look at some of the things that have come from across the way. The member for Simcoe—Grey asked the Minister of Energy, “Why are you risking it all—your political career, your legal career, your integrity...?” The member from Simcoe—Grey, in this House, talked about “the public shaming they have already received” about breaking the law.

Mr. Speaker, this is outrageous. Let us allow the committee to do its work. To stand in this House and prejudge the work of the committee and to tarnish the name of the Minister of Energy is, quite frankly, unacceptable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, since when is it outrageous for a parliamentary committee to expect a Premier to answer for his actions?

I'd like to read from the Premier's own words yesterday: “Since 1792, through the War of 1812, the industrialization of our province, the First World War, through Prohibition, the Great Depression, the Second World War, a series of minority governments and coalitions in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s which saw government held by all three parties, through the advent of the Internet, through globalization and then our most recent recession”—these were the Premier's words. Well, I say no Premier has ever left such a legacy of disrespect for the legislative process; the obstruction of justice; disrespect for this Legislature—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Frank Klees: I will ask now: Will he admit that he is at the centre of this scandal—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, he wants to stand up and talk about disrespect. The fact of the matter is, this was a very important motion that was debated by this Legislature. I gave full notice to all members of this House that our party wished to put forward an amend-

ment which would charge the committee to come forward with recommendations that would be important—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton will withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'll withdraw.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we came forward with an amendment which would allow a legislative committee of this Legislature to come forward with recommendations that would help all parties function when it came to balancing the public interest and the committee's rights to have documents. We told every member of the House that we wanted to proceed with that, and he and his party stood up and moved closure. They stifled debate in this House. They would not allow us to even move this amendment. And he talks about disrespect.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. The Premier's principal secretary, one of his closest personal advisers, is shown throughout the gas plant documents participating in meetings and steering the ship, but there isn't a single email from him.

When the former principal secretary is asked to testify, will he tell Ontarians how much money the Premier's office was comfortable wasting on the decision to cancel the Oakville power plant?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We have a committee and the committee has a mandate, and I would hope that the committee will do its work. I would expect they would do their work.

There is a lot of discussion in this House about the gas plants, about not proceeding with gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville, a decision that both the NDP and the Tories supported. In fact, they were out making a lot of their decision and their determination.

But once you decide not to proceed with the gas plants, everybody knows there's going to be a cost. Everybody knows, because they both won contracts through a competitive process. We worked hard to negotiate a relocation. We obtained a relocation to willing communities and they will provide electricity to the people of Ontario. That's what we're supposed to do once you make the tough decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, it's not good for the reputation of this Legislature for you to ignore questions and pass them along, questions related directly to your office.

The Premier's personal policy adviser on energy is also shown throughout the documents participating in meetings and working with the Premier's principal secretary on the gas plants file, but again, all his emails are missing.

Did the Premier's personal policy adviser tell the Premier how much it would cost to cancel the Oakville gas plant?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Let's be very clear: The memorandum of agreement speaks to the cost. The memorandum of agreement and the result of the negotiations—very hard negotiations that we were very worried about if all the documents were public—were concluded on Monday morning, and we know that the cost of it is \$40 million.

We know that there's an agreement for the same 900-megawatt gas plant to go to Lennox, where there's already an oil- and gas-fired facility, and we know that the net revenue requirement is lower. The cost they'll get for the electricity in the future is lower because of the consideration of the turbines that had already been purchased. That's the agreement. That's the cost. That's where we are.

PHARMACISTS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Ontario families are busier than ever, and between work and family commitments, the average family leads a “just-in-time” life. That's what I would call it. And when a loved one is not well, families rely on their pharmacists to provide them with more than just important medications, but also health care advice when they need it.

Speaker, through you to the minister: How are we ensuring that pharmacists who work so close to home in our communities are best able to provide Ontarians with the help that they need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our government recognizes—indeed we celebrate—the role that pharmacists play as full members of our health care team. The enhancements to the practice of pharmacy we've achieved so far would not have been possible without our valued Ontario Pharmacists' Association partners, and we welcome them today to this Legislature.

In 2007, we launched the first professional pharmacy service, the MedsCheck program, and that allows pharmacists to ensure that patients are taking the right medication in the right dose at the right time.

1110

I'm sure the members opposite would like to know what more pharmacists are doing, Speaker. In 2010, as a result of drug system reforms, our government invested an additional \$100 million a year in funding towards more professional pharmacy services.

Speaker, optimizing the role of pharmacists in our health care system is an important part of our plan to improve health care for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: All of us rely on the advice of local pharmacists to make basic health care decisions, especially when our children are sick or when our parents are using multiple medications. I know that I rely on my pharmacist for advice.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What's being done to maximize the potential for pharmacists in the health care system so that Ontarians can get the greatest

benefit out of their pharmacist's skills and out of their training?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, an important part of the government's action plan for health care is our commitment to better utilize regulated health professionals so they can practice to their full scope of practice. That gives Ontarians better access to better care. It improves the services patients get. They get more timely access to the care that they need. In particular, patients in underserved communities benefit from having expanded access to new and improved health care services.

Every day, about 220,000 Ontarians visit a community pharmacy. They're highly accessible to Ontarians. They're often available in the evenings and on the weekends. In recent decades, the scope of practice of pharmacy has evolved from a model based on filling prescriptions to a model based on using all of their education, their wealth of knowledge to provide better care for people.

I'm committed to working with our pharmacists to optimize their role in our health care system by further expanding their scope of practice. I hope to have more to say about this soon.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Your government has made some very poor choices recently with Ontario taxpayer dollars. You had a choice of whether or not to build power plants in Mississauga and Oakville, and you chose to build. When it became clear that you were going to lose seats in the last election in Mississauga and Oakville, you had a choice. You could have risked losing seats or you could have thrown a Hail Mary pass for your campaign team to cancel the power plants. You chose winning seats. And when this Legislature asked for all the documents about your campaign team's decision to withhold and cancel the power plant, you had a choice: either comply with the Speaker's orders or withhold important documents this assembly asked for. You chose to withhold some very important documents. These are all choices you made, bad choices, costly choices.

The question is very clear. They're very clear. Will the Premier testify at the committee and explain his role in the \$650-million scandal?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Or will he choose to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I remind the members that when I say “thank you,” that's the end. Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: First of all, I disagree totally with the premise of the honourable member's question, and I think it's important that we go back to the history of this issue. The fact of the matter is, the Minister of Energy appeared in front of the estimates committee. Requests were made for certain documents and the Minister of Energy rightly pointed out that there were competing in-

terests here. We had the interests of solicitor-client privilege, something that is protected by the Constitution of Canada. We also had sensitive commercial matters because there were transactions going on, and we also, on the other hand, had the right of committees to ask for documents.

Mr. Speaker, we have spent the last several months trying to balance those interests. The fact is that I went forward to that honourable member's party, as well as the New Democratic Party, with a series of compromises to try to balance those interests, as well as charging the committee that has been—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The only interests they've been trying to balance are their own political interests, Speaker. He'd better start telling the truth, because that's exactly what they're doing with taxpayer dollars.

This Premier knows Ontarians are angry—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think the member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

They've lost all perspective, Speaker. The people of Ontario are angry. They're asking for us to not only have a contempt motion, but they want us to have a confidence motion, because they don't believe them anymore.

If they can't have perspective, let me help them, Speaker. If they can't tell what \$650 million could buy for people in Ontario, let me help them out here. Just for five extra seats in this assembly, this is what they could have spent their \$650 million on: They could have spent on schools that are needed in high-growth areas like Ottawa, Mississauga, Brampton, and Oakville. They could have kept rural schools open in Peterborough, in Kingston, in Blyth, or they could have bought textbooks for students. The so-called education Premier chose to put his campaign team first rather than Ontario students.

So my question is back to the Premier—the education Premier: How can he look at himself in the mirror after having made this decision? How could he have done this at the expense of tomorrow's leaders in this province?

Hon. John Milloy: I would have thought by this point that that honourable member would have learned that theatrics and yelling don't make anything more believable. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the party of Bill Davis, when I look at the party of Norm Sterling—if you want to talk about being thrown under the bus—I think it's actually quite embarrassing.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me share with the honourable member what the leader of the official opposition said on September 25, 2011: "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga." The member from Halton: "I was pleased when" the Oakville plant "was cancelled." The member from Halton, in a press release: "Minister, will you move the Oakville power plant? ... I am asking the minister to consider moving this plant." The member from Haldimand-Norfolk wrote the former Minister of Energy: "The potential for future alternate generation at Nanticoke to replace that slated for the proposed and

disputed Clarkson plant should receive ample consideration."

The facts speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker. Every party in this House wanted the cancellation of that plant, and it's time that the honourable member acknowledged that fact.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I will try again to ask the Premier a question; we will see if we get an answer.

According to the documents, it appears that the Oakville gas plant was cancelled without the input of the Minister of Energy. In fact, we hear that TransCanada "nearly blew a gasket" when they found out the minister knew nothing about the backroom negotiations. So if it wasn't the minister's office, who made the decision to waste hundreds of millions of dollars on the Oakville gas plant cancellation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, notwithstanding—*Applause.*

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Thank you.

I appreciate the support here today, as I do appreciate the support that both opposition parties offered in the strongest fashion with respect to the relocation of these gas plants. Once again I want to thank them. This was a difficult decision, but knowing that we had unanimity in this regard, knowing that we had both opposition parties standing four-square with us in our decision to relocate these plants, made it a little bit simpler.

One of the things I'm looking forward to from the committee—because we provided full disclosure with respect to our costing—is, we're wondering how much it is that the NDP budgeted for the relocation and how much the official opposition budgeted for the relocation. We look forward to getting that information as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: In October 2010, the Minister of Energy said, "As we're putting together an update to our long-term energy plan, it has become clear we no longer need this plant in Oakville." Yet we know that in a meeting which included the Premier's principal secretary and the Premier's energy adviser, the decision was made by five people—no public servants. It's clear these five people did not include the energy minister and did not include public servants who put together the energy plan.

Can the Premier tell Ontarians who amongst his staff made the decision to waste hundreds of millions of dollars on the cancellation of the Oakville plant?

1120

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the interest shown in these matters, Speaker, but that's exactly why we have a committee, and I think we should let the committee do its work.

But, again, one of the things I would recommend to the committee, given the strong and unanimous support that we shared among all three parties for the relocation of these gas plants, given that the government side has provided full disclosure with respect to our costing, and

in fact actual costs, it would be good to know how much the official opposition and the NDP budgeted with respect to the costing for the relocation of these plants. We all agreed that it was important and in the public interest that we relocate these plants. We did the work with respect to costing, but I think the public deserves to know how much exactly both opposition parties set aside in terms of costing for relocating these plants.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, the week before Thanksgiving is designated as Agriculture Week in Ontario, which means that this year it will run from October 1 to 7. I know that agriculture is important to this province as a whole, as well as my riding of Peterborough.

I want to recognize Mr. Steve Brackenridge, the president of the Peterborough County Federation of Agriculture, and his board for the great job they do to promote agriculture in Peterborough. For example, agri-food is a major contributor to Ontario's gross national product, with Quaker, Tropicana, Gatorade and PepsiCo Foods in Peterborough being good examples.

Ontario farmers produce more than 200 agricultural commodities, the agri-food industry employs more than 700,000 people and Ontario's agri-food exports are growing at \$9.9 billion.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister inform this House how the government is going to acknowledge Agriculture Week in Ontario?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member for his question, and I know all the farmers in the great riding of Peterborough appreciate his ongoing advocacy. He gets it.

I think those farmers would also want to know that since 2003, the McGuinty government has invested more than \$100 million to support local, fresh Ontario food initiatives and to encourage local organizations and businesses to promote and carry Ontario food products.

As Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I've been doing a number of events this week to celebrate local food, starting with opening my own Ancaster Fair in Ancaster; then, on Monday, to a visit Lindley's Farm, as well as the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers trade show; a trip to Everdale farm yesterday, urban farming, farming in the city; and Flowers Canada AGM last night; and to cap it all off—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: That was a great response. It was a great harvest of information.

I believe Agriculture Week is important, not just for farmers but for all citizens of Peterborough riding. With Agriculture Week being the week before Thanksgiving, it's a great opportunity for everyone to reflect on the importance of agriculture—farmers feed cities—and to

celebrate farmers and their great contribution to Ontario's economy.

Speaker, through you once again to the minister, what can the people of my riding celebrate about Agriculture Week?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: This is a great time to appreciate those who produce food in this great province of ours. I encourage everyone to support our agri-food industry and to buy more of the good things that grow in Ontario. Look for the Foodland Ontario label, shop at one of our more than 200 farm markets, and enjoy a visit to a local farm. Local fare is available at a lot of dining establishments. Look for it.

Choose Ontario wines or craft beer to complement your next meal and, of course, as Canada Flowers said last night, brighten up your table with some bright Canadian flowers.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I just want to note that if we could get Ontario families to shift, not spend more but shift, \$10 a week in their buying habits towards buying local produce, we could increase the GDP \$2.4 million and create 10,000 new jobs.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier. Premier, we have heard in this House from your finance minister that your Liberal re-election campaign team was behind the decision to nix the Mississauga gas plant, and yet you allowed your energy minister to take the fall for this scandalous waste and seat-saver decision. But, Premier, we have yet to hear you apologize for throwing a senior minister under the bus. In fact, we have yet to hear any of your caucus apologize to hard-working Ontarians for wasting \$650 million to save your political skin and Liberal seats.

Premier, how do you intend to explain to the people of my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound that you wasted \$650 million to save four Liberal seats but have no money for something as essential as a hospital in Markdale that you twice promised to build?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the budget plan we've laid out and all of the public accounts with respect to this have been tabled with the people. They've been audited by the Auditor General. We look forward to the committee's exploration of these important matters as we move forward. We will continue to provide full disclosure, as we have. I'll remind the member opposite that the numbers associated with Mississauga were fully disclosed to public accounts. Those public accounts were signed off on by the Auditor General.

I'd also remind the member that, as we move forward through committee, we will look forward to having the opportunity to discuss these and other matters, matters that are important to jobs in this province, the kinds of jobs that we need in this province, because that, at the end of the day, is what all Ontarians are interested in hearing us debate—not this stuff, Mr. Speaker. They're

interested in jobs. They're interested in a growing economy. The plan we've laid out is the right plan for a brighter future for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Walker: To the Premier again: The reality is that folks in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and across this great province will go without a new hospital, without MRIs, without CT scans, hip replacement, cancer treatment and cataract surgery because you wasted \$650 million. Your government is now synonymous with the most shockingly vile scandals in the history of the province, from eHealth to Ornge to nixed gas plants. Your principal victims are Ontario taxpayers, who sacrifice, work hard and entrust you with their money. What kind of Premier allows \$650 million worth of political interference over new community hospitals?

Premier, will you keep defending your scandal-plagued legacy or fess up and apologize to the communities that go without new hospitals and essential health services as a result of these scandals under your watch?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. Prior to the election, they said to cancel those gas plants, and then they didn't put any numbers in their own documents to account for that. What we do know about their plan is that Don Drummond and others pointed out that they did not have enough revenue built in to meet their targets. What we do know is that they have no plan for jobs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You asked the question. Listen to the answer.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They want to continue to cut taxes further for corporations instead of moving back to balance, instead of making the important investments we need to make in education and health care.

We reject their ideas, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to offer constructive plans to build a better future with better schools and health care for all Ontarians. That's what we're about. It's about jobs. It's about the economy, not about this kind of petty questioning that ought to be dealt with in committee in an appropriate fashion, where the government will defend the decisions—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Health. In May, when asked about approving changes to hospital services in Niagara, the minister said, "We really need to hear from the community before we can recommend anything."

In Dr. Smith's poll, the Pollara poll—he's the government-appointed supervisor—the communities of Welland, Port Colborne, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie indicated that they want hospital services to remain in their communities. I did a health survey this summer as well, to every household in my riding, and the results are equally clear, Minister. My constituents want access to

health closer to their homes. Will the minister listen now that communities have spoken?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I do want to start by saying thank you to Dr. Kevin Smith for going in, as supervisor, to the Niagara Health System. I think he has done, by all accounts, and certainly in my opinion, a superb job in getting the Niagara Health System back on track, for listening very, very carefully to what communities have told him. He has submitted a report. It's a report that I'm reviewing carefully.

1130

I do think it's important that we always keep our eye on what is best for the patients, what is best for the people of Niagara—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do understand that there is not unanimity in Niagara—I gather there hasn't been, and I'm hopeful that there will be a common understanding of what we need to do to move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: My constituents have started to hear about a reckless plan that will slowly remove services from the Welland hospital. This spring—this coming spring, Minister—we're about to lose in-patient mental health services, we're about to lose children's health, we're about to lose maternity services and we're about to lose in-patient women's health issues. This will be felt in our hospital and it will be felt in our community.

So, in spite of no official decision being made yet to shut down the Welland hospital, it is death by a thousand cuts. Is this minister prepared to assure the people of the Welland riding that access to our health care will remain safe?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Dr. Smith has done a very thorough review of services available throughout the Niagara Health System. He has given us some very good advice in his report. We are reviewing those recommendations carefully.

I had the honour of actually visiting the Niagara area recently. I saw first-hand the construction of the St. Catharines hospital. I also visited a hospital in Niagara Falls.

I know how important health care is to all of the people of Ontario and in the Niagara area. We will be guided by one issue only, the one question only: What is the best thing we can do to provide the best possible care to the people of Niagara?

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today I've got a question for the Minister of Economic Development. Research In Motion has been in the news recently, and I'm sure we're all familiar with the challenges they're facing as a company. RIM has helped create a lot of talent in Ontario;

they've had a tremendous effect on the information and communications technology sector. Their success has led to increased success in the sector overall. Many Ontarians are employed in this sector, and they want to know how the sector is performing as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation: Can the minister please tell us how the ICT sector is performing in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member's absolutely right. Our information technology communication sector—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order; it's the second time.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yeah, yeah. Something tells me you don't listen to me.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm not sure what's so partisan about great news in the information and communications technology sector but, Mr. Speaker, this is good news. Ontario's ICT sector is now ranked second in North America when it comes to jobs, next to California. We're the third-largest cluster in North America. Ontario accounts for almost half of all of Canada's total employment in this sector, and we manufacture close to half of the products in that area as well, which is great news.

The ICT sector contributed \$28.4 billion to Ontario's economy in 2011—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order.

Hon. Brad Duguid: —and more than 270,000 Ontarians are working in this sector today. We're very pleased and we're very proud of the commitment that we've made to growing this sector in Ontario, and we're very pleased with the impact this sector is having in Ontario's economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks to the minister for that answer. I'm sure we're all glad to hear that despite the challenges the company is facing, ICT remains vibrant in Ontario.

While it's great to hear the overall sector continues to thrive, I know that many others in this House would share my concern for the workers at RIM. We're always concerned when somebody else loses their job. We don't want to lose the skills, as well, of these tremendously talented individuals.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the minister please explain what steps have been taken to ensure that the displaced workers at RIM are receiving the support they need at this very difficult time?

Hon. Brad Duguid: There's a lot of good news happening in our ICT sector, but we do know that RIM is going through a very challenging transition right now. This company has done so much to pump up Ontario's economy over the years. We owe a lot to RIM for the work that they've done. At the same time we're very confident, as they go through this transition, that our ICT sector will remain very, very strong in that area. A lot of

it is because of some of the partnerships that we've created there.

I just look to the Waterloo area. I look to Communi-tech, where we've seen 425 new companies created in that particular facility. We've seen 4,000 jobs created in those companies. That's the way to go: nurturing those start-up companies and doing everything we can to create the next RIM, and I won't be surprised at all if it comes from Waterloo once again.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Premier. Premier, we now know you've wasted \$650 million on buying Liberal seats in the GTA. To get that money, you forced a number of your ministers to sacrifice priorities in their ridings—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I had to kind of process that a little bit, but the accusation is not acceptable. If you would withdraw that, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdrawn.

Take the government House leader, for example: Day after day, he stands in this House defending your Liberal seat-saver program, even though he had to shelve the Highway 7 expansion just a month after you cancelled the Oakville power plant.

Premier, you've already thrown the energy minister—and now the member for Kitchener Centre—under the bus, and you won't even apologize to Ontarians.

So I have to ask: As the Premier of this province, will you do the honourable thing and apologize to your fellow members and Ontarians for deliberately misusing \$650 million of taxpayers' money on your Liberal seat-saver program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, maybe that member and his party ought to explain why they voted against record investments in new hospitals in the last budget. Maybe the members from Cambridge and other ridings ought to say why they opposed improving hospitals and improving education. Maybe they ought to explain to parents across Ontario why they want to close schools, why they want 55,000 jobs lost in the broader public sector. Maybe they ought to explain why they want to stop full-day learning, something that we on this side believe in strongly.

No, Mr. Speaker. Our plan is the right plan. It was laid out in a budget that that member and his party refused to vote on. Not only that, they removed sections of the budget that were taken right out of their own platform. They are so mired in mud and waste, they're up to here. They can't think straight. They won't represent—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: In light of the Premier not answering my question, I'll actually direct it right over to

the government House leader because, frankly, Ontarians don't buy what we just heard there.

Minister, your government doesn't even have Highway 7 on the 10-year infrastructure plan, so we know that your latest promise on this project was nothing more than a Liberal vote-buying scheme in the recent Kitchener-Waterloo by-election. Thank heaven there wasn't a power plant in KW, or I'm sure we'd be out another \$650 million—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

I'm hearing that again, so you have to be very careful of how you choose your words. You did not choose wisely again. I would ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdrawn. Sorry—seat-saver program.

Again, I'm happy to know that we didn't have a power plant in KW, or we would likely be out another \$650 million.

Minister, I don't know how you can stand there, day after day, defending the Premier's selfish decision to hang you and your colleague out to dry just so he can avoid taking the fall for the Liberal Party's seat-saver program. I hope you know that with that money you wasted on cancelling gas plants, you could have paid for Highway 7 two times.

Minister, how does it feel to sit in cabinet, abandoning the needs of your riding and the region of Waterloo, just to save Liberal seats in the GTA?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In our budget, the 2012 budget, which that member voted against—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In Simcoe North—the member for Simcoe North voted against \$474 million for the Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care. The member for Barrie voted against \$258 million for the Royal Victoria hospital. In Cambridge, the local member for Cambridge voted against the Cambridge hospital redevelopment.

They call names; they yell names across the floor. They're over their heads in mud; they're over their heads in petty, cheap, political rhetoric. They ought to stand up for their constituents. They ought to lay out a plan like we've done. We're going to fight for that plan and we're going to fight for jobs in their ridings, for better health care and better education, while they drown in their own—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor West on a point of order.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: A point of order: Speaker, questions put during daily question period must deal exclusively with matters that are within the administrative responsibility of the government or the individual

minister addressed. More specifically, a member is not entitled to put a question during daily question period that relates to the administration of a committee.

We know that there has been a matter that has recently been referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Speaker, you referred to this during question period. I direct you to chapter 11 of O'Brien and Bosc. The authors state, "Questions seeking information about the schedule and agenda of committees may be directed to Chairs of committees. Questions to the ministry or to a committee Chair concerning the proceedings or work of a committee ... may not be raised."

As a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, I look forward to appropriate questions and inquiries coming forward at committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. I want to tell the member two things. First, there's a difference between the workings of the committee and the topic of the committee.

Number 2, I had already mentioned earlier that I was listening carefully to how those questions were being put. I did not find any of them to be—well, let me put it this way: Some were close, but I did not rule against that, and I would have done so.

I thank the member for the point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Same point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same point of order, the member from Newmarket-Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, further to this, can you inform the House when the first meeting of that committee is scheduled to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not my purview, and that's not for me to respond to.

This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome Esther Chen, who is a constituent of mine who is visiting us today. She's the mother of page Anna. Welcome to the Legislature, Esther.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today representatives from ACTRA: Rick Howland, Tabby Johnson, David Ferry and Sue Milling. They've been having a great day visiting with all of you.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de vous présenter M. Éric Desrochers. Éric est un étudiant en science politique et en études internationales au Collège Glendon ici à Toronto.

Mr. John O'Toole: They're not here yet, but I'm also introducing Heather Allin, president of ACTRA, whom I met with just before lunch. I welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: We're full of actors today. It gives me great pleasure, as the Ontario PC critic for tourism, culture and sport, to welcome representatives

from ACTRA: Ferne Downey, national president of ACTRA; David Sparrow, vice-president, member services; and world-renowned Canadian actor Daniel Kash, who many of you remember from movies such as *Aliens* and *RoboCop*. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This morning I did the introduction of the Rutherford family, who are here visiting with Jenna Rutherford, our page. They weren't in the audience this morning, but they are sitting up in the gallery now, so I'd like to welcome them, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It appears to me that that's going to be two times that they're in Hansard. Is that correct?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I think, Mr. Speaker, you count the same way I do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm awfully glad that I do.

We welcome our guests.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GEORGE ZEGOURAS

Mr. Todd Smith: It's with sadness that I make this statement today. This week, the city of Belleville lost its longest-serving mayor, one of its great business people and one of the community's most distinctive characters.

George Zegouras was born in Anthorhion, Greece, in 1937. He immigrated to Belleville in 1954. In the 1960s, he and his brother Peter opened Belleville Foods, and he quickly became a small business cornerstone in the Quinte region.

His son, Adam, who is a crown attorney in Belleville, remembered his dad best when he said, "Dad had a smile for everybody." The smile was always on his face—and usually an infectious laugh that would encompass the entire room when he spoke.

In 1980, George became mayor of Belleville, a position he would hold until 1991, then again from 2000 until 2003. He became a driving force behind Belleville's signature waterfront festival during his time as mayor. He was also instrumental in bringing major employers, like the Sears distribution warehouse and Halla Climate Control, to the Friendly City.

He is survived by his four children and six grandchildren. There is some comfort in knowing that he has been reunited with his wife, Diane, whom George loved very deeply.

George Zegouras was a great man in the city of Belleville. He was a great ambassador for the city of Belleville not just across Ontario, but on trips throughout the world as well. He started the twin city program with Lahr, Germany, and also Gunpo, South Korea—and we raised the flag for South Korea here today and made mention of their foundation day as well.

George Zegouras will be dearly missed in the city of Belleville.

ANTI-HUNGER CAMPAIGN

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I'm very honoured to inform the members of the Legislature the details of an innovative campaign that was launched in the city of London this past summer.

On Tuesday, July 31, Mohammad Osman Yassine, president of the Islamic Centre of Southwestern Ontario, announced the launch of the Fast a Day, Drive Hunger Away campaign. This novel initiative asks local Londoners to fast for a day and make a donation to the London Food Bank equal to the amount that they would have spent on food that day. This initiative was pioneered by Imam Munir El-Kassem, who sought to share the traditions and spirit of Ramadan with the broader community, while addressing our social and moral responsibilities to each other.

We know that more than 800 million adults and children worldwide go hungry every day. Indeed, 37.5% of food bank usage comes from children under the age of 18.

I was so very proud of the efforts of this campaign by the London Islamic community and the contributions of local Londoners who participated on behalf of this most noble cause.

Lastly, I am proud to say that the Fast a Day, Drive Hunger Away campaign generated a substantial donation for the London Food Bank and helped many people who were experiencing challenging times.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today to congratulate 14 individuals in my riding of Ajax-Pickering, who were presented with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal on September 5, 2012.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of Her Majesty's ascension to the throne. In honour of the Queen's kindness, spirit and tremendous sense of duty, 14 individuals were presented with medals for extraordinary contributions to my Ajax-Pickering community. These recipients were carefully nominated for their steadfast loyalty and unwavering efforts to improve the Ajax-Pickering area where possible. These recipients range from cultural leaders to selfless volunteers to extraordinary business people and dedicated sports volunteers. There was standing room only overflowing into the next room during these presentations.

Overall, these outstanding individuals are integral parts of my riding, and it is my most heartfelt honour to present you with their names today. They are: Don Terry, William Parish, Ken Brown, Dr. Romas Stas, Arthur Rennick, Mrs. Pat Brown, Anita Witty, Tom Batchellor, Dinesh Kumar, Lucy Stocco, Kazim Qureshi, Abdulkarim Rahim, Alex Bianchi, and Chris Moriah—whose 98-year-old mother was present to witness this special event. We are very proud of our dedicated residents in Ajax-Pickering.

JOSH PHILLIPS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I rise today to recognize an inspiring young man from Renfrew, Josh Phillips. Josh is now 13 years old, but on Christmas Day, 2008, while playing with relatives, he collapsed suddenly. He had lost feeling in the left side of his body. Josh was rushed to the Renfrew Victoria Hospital from where he was airlifted to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, CHEO. He was met by staff awaiting his arrival and immediately underwent tests. On Boxing Day, he was diagnosed as having suffered a brain stem stroke, a rare occurrence in children. Josh and his family were given the news that every family fears: that Josh may never walk again.

I'm happy to report that in the weeks that followed he began to recover. The great staff and physicians at CHEO provided Josh with daily physiotherapy and constant encouragement.

In the weeks that followed, Josh showed signs of movement. During his time spent recovering he was given the nickname the Comeback Kid for his steadfast determination. Josh set a goal for himself that he would walk out of the hospital on the day he was released, and I'm delighted to report that with the help of his parents, Scott and Susan, he did that.

Josh has now been named next year's telethon champion, in the lead-up to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario's annual springtime telethon. I would ask that you all remember and support the telethon next June and that you would join me in wishing Josh a successful and memorable stint as this year's telethon champion—and also for his continued recovery and his courage.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yet again, people in Northern Ontario, and more specifically northeastern Ontario, have woken up to more bad news. The government decided that it was going to shut down camping in parks such as Ivanhoe, René Brunelle, Fushimi Lake and other provincial parks across northeastern Ontario. And for some people down here, they may think that's not a big deal, but people living in northern Ontario enjoy the outdoors. One of the ways they do that is to buy campers and bring them to a provincial park or a private park to be able to enjoy the great outdoors.

1510

Once you shut down Ivanhoe, once you shut down René Brunelle, once you shut down Fushimi, it means they really have no other place to go. People have made huge investments—\$30,000, \$40,000—to buy a trailer, an ATV, a boat, the things they enjoy in the summer, with nowhere to go next year.

We say to ourselves, when you have a government that could find \$650 million to save seats in southern Ontario, in Mississauga and Oakville, why couldn't they find literally what is in the tens of thousands of dollars of money to be able to operate provincial parks in ridings like Nickel Belt, Timiskaming-Cochrane, Timmins—

James Bay, Nipissing and other places where parks have been shut down?

I think it shows a complete disregard for northeastern Ontario. The government is yet again showing their disregard for the people of the north, and they'll rue the day that they have done so.

KOREAN NATIONAL FOUNDATION DAY

Mr. David Zimmer: This morning I had the honour of joining the Consul General of South Korea, Mr. Chung, along with many representatives from this chamber and other public officials, to raise the Korean flag at Queen's Park. We gathered to commemorate the legendary founding of the Korean nation some 4,000 years ago.

October 3 is Korean National Foundation Day. It celebrates the founding of Korea. It's also the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between South Korea and Canada.

I want to thank Koreans for all of the work they do in our province. They work hard, they contribute; they've added a tremendous amount to our cultural life, our social life and our business life. In fact, the two-way trade with South Korea and Ontario now is close to \$4.5 billion, and it's growing and growing and growing. Last year, tourism to Ontario, to Canada, from Korea was up some 20%.

I know that all members of this chamber who were at the flag-raising ceremony and then attended the magnificent luncheon hosted by the Korean Consul General were mightily impressed with the food and the ambience. I know, Speaker, you were there. You brought your personal greetings. It was very much appreciated by the Korean community.

SENIOR DRIVERS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to share some very good news for Ontario's senior commercial truck drivers. Last year, when I was elected as MPP for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I strongly advocated for changes on behalf of drivers and the need to reform Ontario's senior commercial driver's licence renewal program. Since my election, I've met with industry associations, farmers and small business owners, and they've all told me the same thing. There's too much red tape, too many unnecessary regulations, and it's hurting their business and hurting Ontario's economy.

Accordingly, I would like to confirm that as of April 1, 2013, there will be several important changes to Ontario's senior commercial driver's licence renewal program for those drivers aged 65 to 79, including ending the mandatory annual road test and reducing the written knowledge test frequency, from annually to every five years.

I received confirmation from the Minister of Transportation regarding these important changes. In his letter,

Minister Chiarelli agreed that the regulations needed to be changed.

I appreciate the government's willingness to work with me on this important issue on behalf of the people of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and indeed all of Ontario. Most importantly, I am happy that we were able to eliminate some unnecessary red tape and help allow our businesses to continue to thrive and grow in the province of Ontario.

AMATEUR LACROSSE

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, we have a long tradition of lacrosse in Peterborough, a tradition that has seen our teams win over and over again, and this year is no exception. The Mann Cup 2012 series got off to a slow start for the Lakers with a 0 and 2 record, but the fans weren't worried. They were there game after game cheering their team on, and their loyalty was rewarded, as it has been in the past, having won 14 Mann Cup championships. Every player on this year's team is to be commended for their contribution to this victory.

Mike Thompson, their goalie, stopped 38 out of 46 shots in the final game, which earned him player of the game honours.

Led by coach and general manager Jamie Batley and a strong executive and coaching staff, the following players showed just what it means to be a Laker and play lacrosse in Peterborough: Brock Sorensen, Scott Self, Mike Hobbins, Kyle Sorensen, Mark Steenhuis, Mac Allen, John Tavares, Mark Farthing, Scott Evans, Jordan MacIntosh, Josh Wasson-McQuigge, Daryl Gibson, Andrew Suitor, Chad Culp, Chris White, Cory Vitarelli, John Grant Jr., Brad Self, Peter Rennie, Mat Giles, Tyler Carlson, Kevin Croswell, Andrew Watt, Aaron Grayson, Jamie Lincoln, Mike Thompson, Tracey Kelusky, Eric Bissell, Josh Gillam, Shawn Evans, Jim Purves.

Mr. Speaker, this is the 2012 Mann Cup champions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final statement, the member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm only disappointed that the member from Peterborough didn't mention Ted Higgins, who has held that team together for years.

CARDIAC CARE

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak, but I have a hard time saying that it's a pleasure to do so. Friday, September 28, was the last day for a cardiac clinic located in my riding in Durham region, serving the patients across the region. The clinic offered ICD checkups close to home. ICD stands for implantable cardioverter defibrillator. It's an implant device that helps patients who generally have end-stage heart failure and an extremely high risk of sudden cardiac death because of ventricular fibrillation.

I am advised that this clinic closed because of drastic fee reductions imposed by the McGuinty government in

Ontario. I'm very disappointed and indeed saddened to know that my patients won't get ICD checkups close to home and will have to travel to St. Michael's Hospital, with the stress involved in that travel, or other Toronto hospitals for follow-up.

For these patients, this closure is a bitter pill to swallow. While this government is imposing drastic reductions in fees to support heart clinics, it's indifferent to spending \$640 million for new generating stations that aren't really needed. I believe it is the duty of the government to save lives, not seats.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank Dr. Bhargava and the other physicians for putting their patients and their patients' safety first in my riding of Durham and, I believe, across Ontario.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I suspect, on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I'd like to introduce Ms. Domna Theodorou, an intern in my office. She is a fourth-year U of T student studying criminology and socio-legal studies and next year plans to pursue her master's in justice system administration. She lives in North York. She's going to be serving in my office, and we welcome her to Queen's Park and thank her for her volunteer efforts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While that's not a point of order, we always welcome our guests to Queen's Park. We're glad you're here.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm very pleased today, on behalf of a good friend of mine, Sister Veronica O'Reilly, General Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Peterborough, to introduce the following bill.

CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH IN CANADA ACT, 2012

Mr. Leal moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr9, An Act to amalgamate The Sisters of St. Joseph of Hamilton, The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of London, in Ontario, The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of Peterborough in Ontario and Sisters of St. Joseph for the Diocese of Pembroke in Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

1520

FAIRNESS IN FILM AND MEDIA
PRODUCTION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ
DANS LE SECTEUR DE LA PRODUCTION
CINÉMATOGRAPHIQUE ET MÉDIATIQUE

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 127, An Act to regulate labour relations in the industries of film, television, radio and new media /
Projet de loi 127, Loi régissant les relations de travail dans les industries du film, de la télévision, de la radio et des nouveaux médias.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This bill will ensure that a contract is a contract; that actors, directors, musicians, technicians in the film, television, radio and new media industries can stop wasting time in courts to enforce their contractual rights and instead spend their time creating the art that they can and want to make.

PLANNING AMENDMENT ACT
(ENABLING MUNICIPALITIES
TO REQUIRE INCLUSIONARY
HOUSING), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT
DU TERRITOIRE (INCLUSION
DE LOGEMENTS ABORDABLES
PAR LES MUNICIPALITÉS)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to amend the Planning Act with respect to inclusionary housing / Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire à l'égard de l'inclusion de logements abordables.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Section 34 of the act is amended to allow the councils of local municipalities to pass zoning bylaws, to require inclusionary housing in the municipality by mandating that a specified percentage of housing units in new housing developments containing 20 or more housing units must be affordable to low- and moderate-income households. New section 37.1 of the act deals with inclusionary housing bylaws in greater detail. Section 51 of the act is amended to allow the approval authority to impose, as a condition of approval of a plan of subdivision, a requirement that a specified percentage of housing units in new housing develop-

ments in a subdivision containing 20 or more housing units must be affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

It's the third time I've introduced this; third time is the charm, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll bet you that wasn't in the explanatory notes.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resources on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Everyone in northern Ontario is very excited about the purchase of the Terrace Bay mill by the Aditya Birla Group from Mumbai, India. We have some of their key people here today, and I want to introduce them quickly, if I may. Mr. K.K. Maheshwari, Vijay Kaul, Vinod Tiwari, Giovanni Iadela and, of course, Frank Dottori—let's welcome you. Thank you very much. Great stuff in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Again, to be balanced, that is not a point of order. But we welcome our guests to Queen's Park, of course.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH
MOIS DE L'HISTOIRE DES FEMMES

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I am pleased and honoured to rise in the House today to recognize October as Women's History Month.

Je suis très fière de célébrer les réalisations et progrès remarquables accomplis par les femmes dans le monde entier et ici même.

I'm so proud to celebrate the tremendous strides and achievements made by women around the globe and right here at home. Strong women mean a strong Ontario.

As minister responsible for women's issues, it gives me great pride to speak to what women in our province have accomplished. As we make this progress, we create a brighter future for women and for Ontario.

As recently as 84 years ago, Canadian women were not considered persons. The fact that there are women alive today who, such a short time ago, were not considered persons is one reason that we have Women's History Month in Canada.

The 2012 theme is something that resonates with me both in my role as minister responsible for women's issues and Minister of Education. The theme is Strong Girls, Strong Canada: Leaders from the Start. It's a theme that honours another very special occasion this year during Women's History Month: the first-ever International Day of the Girl on October 11. Canada was a leader in the campaign for this new day to raise aware-

ness of the challenges girls face around the world and to encourage action. This gives us all an opportunity to recognize girls as leaders.

One recent story of a very special girl who showed extraordinary leadership is 14-year-old Annaleise Carr, who, this summer, became the youngest person to swim across Lake Ontario. Annaleise helped raise thousands of dollars to send kids with cancer to camp. Annaleise's role model was Marilyn Bell, who 50 years ago, at the age of 16, was the first person to swim Lake Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, notre province a eu la chance de compter de nombreuses pionnières de tous âges qui ont établi des normes d'excellence et continuent de nous inspirer aujourd'hui.

This province has been blessed with many female trailblazers, of all ages, who set the standard and still inspire us today. Just this week, Ontario and Canada were saddened by the loss of Barbara Ann Scott. In 1948, she became the only Canadian woman to win an Olympic gold medal in figure skating. During her professional skating career, Scott's contract stipulated that a portion of her earnings went to support disabled children.

Women like Barbara and Annaleise, separated in age by decades, are exceptional role models for Ontario girls. I'm proud to live in an Ontario where girls like Annaleise are able to write their own history. Every one of us has a role to play in moving our society toward full equality for women.

Pendant le Mois de l'histoire des femmes et la Journée internationale des filles, je vous invite à célébrer le rôle de chefs de file des filles et des femmes de notre province.

During Women's History Month and on the International Day of the Girl, let us celebrate the leadership roles of girls and women in this province. I encourage every member of this House to continue to work towards equality for all Ontario girls and women.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: J'ai le plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui dans cette Assemblée, pour la troisième année consécutive, pour souligner le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes que l'on a célébré la semaine dernière, le 25 septembre.

As you will recall, the act instituting a day to pay tribute to Franco-Ontarians was passed in 2010 with the unanimous support of Ontario's three political parties. Dear colleagues, it is a symbolic day, of course, but above all, it is Ontario's official recognition of the fundamental contribution made by the province's francophones to its economic, social and cultural prosperity.

Le 25 septembre dernier, à l'occasion de cette journée spéciale, j'ai eu le privilège de remettre les Prix de la francophonie 2012 à trois personnes exceptionnelles qui

ont grandement contribué au bien-être ainsi qu'à la vitalité de la francophonie ontarienne.

Je profite donc de l'occasion pour féliciter à nouveau, aujourd'hui, devant cette Assemblée, Gérard Lévesque, qui a remporté le prix remis à un francophone; Alex Munter pour le prix remis à un francophile; et Danielle Blais pour le prix remis à une jeune francophone.

Nous avons célébré les accomplissements de trois individus qui ont contribué, à leur manière, au développement continu de la communauté francophone. Nous avons aussi célébré les progrès remarquables de la francophonie ontarienne.

Depuis 2003, fort de la confiance qui lui a été accordée, mon gouvernement travaille sans relâche afin de s'assurer que les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes puissent justement jouer un rôle de plus en plus significatif dans le développement tout entier de la province. Pour y arriver, nous avons adopté une approche systémique visant à maximiser l'impact de nos actions dans la prestation des services en français à l'échelle du gouvernement mais aussi dans les secteurs clés de l'éducation et de la santé.

1530

Je suis fier, par exemple, de rappeler que l'adoption du règlement sur les tierces parties en 2011 constitue la plus importante mesure législative depuis l'adoption de la Loi sur les services en français. Sa portée a déjà un impact significatif sur la prestation des services en français en s'assurant que les organismes gouvernementaux ayant recours à un tiers sont en conformité avec la Loi sur les services en français.

Non seulement nous avons 25 régions désignées pour les services en français, mais l'Office des affaires francophones continue sans relâche de désigner des agences gouvernementales et des organismes gouvernementaux. Au cours des dernières années, notre gouvernement a validé 225 désignations, et je peux vous dire que l'Office des affaires francophones continue de recevoir un nombre impressionnant de demandes qui couvrent tous les secteurs des services publics et parapublics.

I am taking advantage of this opportunity to congratulate everyone who works for these organizations and reinforces the network of French-language services across the province.

J'aimerais aussi remercier le Commissariat aux services en français, que nous avons créé il y a cinq ans et qui a déjà produit cinq rapports annuels, un rapport spécial et plusieurs rapports d'enquête qui comprennent des recommandations importantes qui nous ont permis et qui continueront de nous aider à mieux servir les francophones de l'Ontario.

In recent years, we have also confirmed our deep commitment to Franco-Ontarians by significantly increasing funding for French-language education. Since 2003, our investments in this sector represent an increase of \$586 million at the elementary and secondary school levels and more than \$85 million at the post-secondary level.

Par ces investissements, nous favoriserons la pleine participation des francophones au développement de la province et ce, pour des générations à venir.

Notre système d'éducation de langue française a joué un rôle de chef de file dans le déploiement dans toute la province de la maternelle et jardin à temps plein. J'aime rappeler que la maternelle et jardin à temps plein—qui est une priorité de notre gouvernement—est née d'abord dans nos écoles françaises.

Afin de répondre aux besoins spécifiques des francophones en matière de santé, nous avons créé six entités de planification des services de santé en français qui jouent un rôle crucial à long terme sur le développement des services de santé en français. En effet, ces entités nous aident et nous aideront à maximiser l'utilisation des ressources tout en assurant une qualité et un accès accru aux services de santé en français.

A healthy, well-educated francophone population is an asset to the province. I am convinced that our investments in education and health and our community's strong commitment will create a bright future for all of the province's francophones and their families.

Mr. Speaker, in 2012, we have every reason to celebrate the advancement of Ontario's francophones.

Toutefois, alors même que nous sommes en train de redresser les finances publiques suite à l'une des pires récessions que le monde ait connues, les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes comprennent les défis auxquels nous faisons face. Ils sont prêts à faire ce qu'il faut pour appuyer et contribuer à la reprise de l'économie.

In fact, they have already started working to help Ontario achieve its new fiscal objectives. That, too, is what we have celebrated, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to celebrate it every day. We are celebrating a francophone community that is proud of what it is, takes responsibility for its institutions and shows inspiring courage.

Vous savez, je voyage régulièrement dans les quatre coins de la province pour aller à la rencontre des francophones, et je suis toujours impressionnée par leur détermination et leur engagement.

Que ce soit à Mississauga, quand j'ai rendu visite en avril dernier à une de nos équipes de santé familiale bilingues, que ce soit à Sudbury, quand j'ai visité en juin les nouvelles installations du Collège Boréal, ou encore à Temiskaming Shores, où je suis allée il y a quelques semaines à la rencontre des maires francophones, je constate de mes yeux à quel point la communauté francophone de l'Ontario est déterminée à effectuer, avec l'ensemble de l'Ontario, le virage nécessaire pour rétablir la prospérité pour chaque Franco-Ontarien et chaque citoyen de la province.

Partout en Ontario, les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes travaillent, créent et gèrent des entreprises, et contribuent au développement économique. Leur bilinguisme s'avère un atout marqué qui donne à la province une longueur d'avance. Ceci doit être reconnu à

sa juste valeur, et je profite de l'occasion qui m'est donnée aujourd'hui pour les en remercier.

Le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes nous donne, depuis trois ans, une occasion importante de célébrer les avancées et l'apport de la communauté franco-ontarienne. La présence française dans notre province remonte à près de quatre siècles, et nous aurons bientôt une autre occasion de souligner et d'encourager le dynamisme du fait français en Ontario.

Indeed, over the last few months, the Office of Francophone Affairs has started an important process of consulting municipalities as well as community organizations to determine how we will celebrate this 400th anniversary across the province in 2015.

I have the intention to make sure that we seize this opportunity, the 400th anniversary of the French presence, to generate long-term tourist opportunities and promote the francophone and bilingual identity of our province.

En effet, pour conclure, je dirais que l'Ontario doit demeurer une province canadienne où la minorité francophone, comme peuple fondateur, est pleinement respectée et valorisée. L'Ontario doit demeurer le modèle que nous sommes pour l'ensemble des communautés minoritaires francophones au Canada.

J'ai confiance, comme ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, que je pourrai compter sur votre appui pour atteindre cet objectif qui s'élève bien au-dessus de la partisanerie qui anime parfois nos débats politiques.

Et je suis heureuse qu'encore une fois cette année, le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes nous ait permis de rendre hommage à la francophonie ontarienne de différentes façons.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased for the opportunity to rise today on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus to speak on Women's History Month, it being October. In fact, the theme for Women's History Month this year is Strong Girls, Strong Canada: Leaders from the Start and embraces the important roles and contributions of Canadian girls across our country.

Last December, the United Nations proclaimed October 11, 2012, as the world's first International Day of the Girl, which was quickly embraced by the government of Canada.

Around the world, there is a growing recognition that the advocacy and protection of basic human rights for girls is fundamental to the future health of our societies. Of course, in many societies, equal rights for girls have not been the norm, neither historically and not today. Around the world, girls still face higher rates of violence, poverty and discrimination, solely because of their gender.

Canada has been at the forefront of the international community in officially recognizing this day. In Canada

and in Ontario, we can be rightly proud of the accomplishments which many of our young women have made in all endeavours and walks of life. We have witnessed their innovation, energy, stamina and drive through their volunteerism, their unparalleled successes in international sports, most recently in the London Olympics, and their unbridled accomplishments in the worlds of entertainment, business and government.

1540

To try and list the countless young women who have demonstrated their contributions and accomplishments which have benefited our country, province and communities in so many ways would be an impossible task, but our admiration and appreciation of what they have done, continue to do and will do goes without saying. There is a growing recognition around the world that support for girls and their basic human rights is key for the development and maintenance of healthy communities.

Improving girls' lives has a ripple effect. What is good for them is good for all of us. The International Day of the Girl will further the promotion of equal rights, treatment and opportunities for girls around the world in all areas of life and society, such as law, nutrition, health care, education and the essential opportunity for personal growth and advancement.

I want to offer my personal best wishes to the young women in this province and urge them to never give up on their dreams of being the best that they can be.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

M. Peter Shurman: Je suis très heureux de me lever dans l'Assemblée aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage aux Franco-Ontariens et aux Franco-Ontariennes pour l'identification du troisième anniversaire du Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

It is important to remember that our French-speaking community is one of the two founding nations of our province. In fact, we have created a day to celebrate our Franco-Ontarian communities, a flag, and a law to preserve services in the French language.

Here in Ontario, we have taken special measures to ensure that Franco-Ontarians are recognized as a founding nation. The Franco-Ontarian flag was adopted by the French Canadian Association of Ontario in 1977 and is symbolic of our dual heritage.

C'est maintenant une opportunité de donner une reconnaissance réelle, de rendre hommage aux Franco-Ontariens—à peu près seulement 5 % de notre population mais vraiment un partenaire égal dans et depuis notre fondation. Il est important de se souvenir que les objectifs doivent être clairs : de promouvoir la langue française et la contribution de nos concitoyens, les Franco-Ontariens, dans les disciplines variées—

économique, médicale, sociale ou n'importe laquelle. C'est notre devoir; c'est notre responsabilité.

À l'image de la population de l'Ontario, la population franco-ontarienne est diverse et vibrante. Elle accueille, depuis de nombreuses années, des francophones de l'Afrique, de l'Asie, du Moyen-Orient et de l'Europe. Les minorités raciales francophones représentent aujourd'hui plus de 10 % de la population francophone de la province. Alors, nos racines franco-ontariennes sont maintenant vraiment mondiales. Nous avons en Ontario la fierté et la confiance d'être une force majeure dans la francophonie du monde.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I offer greetings from our leader, Tim Hudak. We must recognize the special role which the French-speaking community has in the history of our province. As a member of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I am honoured to stand today and bring greetings on the third anniversary of Franco-Ontarian Day, based on Bill 24, which had the unanimous support of the House when initially proposed.

The Progressive Conservative caucus has always been instrumental in promoting the quintessential role which our French-speaking population has played in creating our nation.

Le dynamisme de la communauté francophone que nous voyons aujourd'hui confirme que la langue et la culture françaises demeurent une partie intégrante et fondamentale de la société ontarienne. Je suis très heureux de me lever et d'honorer le troisième Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

Félicitations et merci.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir de souligner aujourd'hui, le 3 octobre, la journée franco-ontarienne. Comme dit le dicton, vaut mieux tard que jamais.

Il y a plusieurs dossiers chauds dans la francophonie de notre province, mais pour des raisons qui m'échappent, le gouvernement semble vouloir les éviter.

Dans un premier temps, dans quelques minutes, je déposerai une pétition signée par plus de 5 962 personnes qui demandent la remise en place de la bourse pour étudier en français. Monsieur le Président, les francophones ne montent pas aux barricades souvent, mais pour ce dossier-là, ils l'ont fait. Je vous encourage, d'ailleurs, à consulter le site internet du Regroupement étudiant franco-ontarien, le RÉFO. Les témoignages vont vous convaincre que cette bourse a fait la différence pour des centaines de francophones qui ont décidé de poursuivre leurs études en français. Contrairement à ce que la ministre veut nous faire à croire, pour nous, il est important que les francophones poursuivent leurs études en français.

Mais aujourd'hui, en geste de bonne volonté, le RÉFO demande au gouvernement de désigner 800 des subventions ontariennes aux étudiants des régions

éloignées, subventions qui existent déjà—d'en désigner 800 pour les francophones qui étudient en français. C'est une main tendue que le REFO offre au gouvernement, une offre à durée limitée. Ne manquez pas l'occasion.

Le deuxième enjeu est la loi 115 qui a été imposée à nos conseils scolaires. Les francophones de l'Ontario se sont battus longtemps pour avoir des conseils scolaires gérés pour et par les francophones. Cette loi spéciale risque de rendre nos conseils incapables de rencontrer leur mandat. À quoi sert d'avoir des conseils scolaires francophones si en bout de ligne, c'est le gouvernement qui décide comment gérer nos écoles? On ne sera pas plus avancé qu'on ne l'était avant.

Puis, il y a la désignation des régions, comme la ville d'Ottawa ou d'Oshawa. La barre est mise tellement haute pour les francophones; il faut avoir l'appui de toutes les personnes concernées. On ne demande à aucun autre groupe d'avoir 100 %, mais on le demande aux francophones. Pour recevoir la désignation, les groupes de citoyens et citoyennes ont besoin de convaincre tous les décideurs. Il suffit qu'une seule personne s'y oppose pour que ça ne passe pas. Une seule personne peut retenir le processus à tout jamais.

J'en aurais bien d'autres, comme le manque de programmes d'études en français, mais je n'ai que deux minutes et demie. C'est facile de répéter des belles paroles durant les discours ministériels, mais face à la francophonie, les actions parlent plus fort que les mots.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further comment?

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise in celebration of Women's History Month, a celebration because we stand as a party with a woman leader, Andrea Horwath, who might very well become the first Premier of the province to be a woman. I stand in celebration of a caucus that is 44% women and growing. I stand in celebration as the first woman in my family to be born a human person, because my mother was born before 1929, and a woman who fought not only to get the vote, in my mother's day, but who also fought to get sex in the human rights code in my day, because I grew up in a town where there was "male wanted" and "female wanted" in our newspapers.

But I also stand in consternation, because two of the great demands of the 1970s and the second wave of feminism were these: equal pay for equal work and accessible daycare for all, and we still don't have them, Mr. Speaker. Women make 71 cents of every dollar that men make in Ontario. We still don't have equity in pay. We still don't have daycare, and that is an essential necessity for women's freedom. And we still experience domestic violence.

To our daughters and to our granddaughters I pass on the great rallying cries of the 1970s that still have not been fulfilled: equal pay for equal work—let's hear it—and universal and accessible daycare for all who need it. Yes, we don't have that, and we need it.

May it be that our granddaughters don't have to have the same rallying cries that I had as a young woman, and

that finally in this province we get equal pay for equal work and we get accessible daycare for all, and yay, Women's History Month.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present petitions from all over Ontario. This one is from Pamela Vander Byl from Orangeville and Doug MacDonald from Acton. It reads as follows:

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive" history "while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment" of the vehicle; "and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced"—rigorously—"by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of vintage vehicle owners and give it to Christina on her second-last day here at Queen's Park—a sad day.

1550

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Paul Miller: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for" many of them;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacy now."

I agree with this and I'll put my name to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's ongoing investment in the RVHS Ajax and Pickering hospital has created an outstanding community health care delivery system; and

"Whereas the Rouge Valley Health System Ajax-Pickering hospital's 10-year vision plan (as read in the Legislature by MPP Dickson) will be instrumental in ensuring the ongoing needs of the increasing population are met;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, sign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario continue to invest in this family-friendly Ajax-Pickering hospital."

I shall attach my signature to it and give it to Maya.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here to repeal Ontario's breed-specific legislation, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

I, of course, endorse this petition and will pass it off to page Maggie to put it on the table.

BOURSE D'ÉTUDES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition signée par 6 972 personnes qui vient de partout en Ontario et qui dit :

« Le gouvernement de l'Ontario a récemment aboli la bourse pour étudier en français pour les étudiants et étudiantes ontariens et ontariennes;

« Cette bourse existait depuis plus de 30 ans et plus de 800 Franco-Ontariens ont reçu cette bourse l'an dernier;

« Les incitatifs financiers pour étudier en français sont quasi inexistant;

« L'accessibilité aux programmes d'études en français reste limitée en Ontario à comparer aux programmes en anglais, c'est-à-dire 22 % des programmes postsecondaires qui sont offerts en anglais le sont aussi en français;

« Les étudiants et étudiantes franco-ontariens et franco-ontariennes doivent plus souvent se déplacer pour poursuivre leurs études postsecondaires dans leur langue que leurs homologues anglophones;

« Les coûts associés aux matériaux didactiques en français sont souvent plus élevés que ceux des matériaux didactiques en anglais;

« Seulement 22 % des diplômés du secondaire franco-ontarien poursuivent leurs études dans un programme postsecondaire en français en Ontario;

« La bourse pour étudier en français est identifiée par plusieurs étudiants comme étant un incitatif clair qui les a amené à choisir une institution postsecondaire franco-ontarienne;

« Pour chaque dollar investi en éducation postsecondaire en langue française en Ontario, 1,10 \$ revient aux coffres de l'État;

« Le rapport Rae de 2005 sur les études postsecondaires en Ontario énonce que les minorités nationales en Ontario, les franco-ontariens et les autochtones, restent parmi les groupes les moins scolarisés de la province;

« L'abolition de cette bourse pourrait mener des étudiants francophones de régions éloignées à poursuivre leurs études en anglais au lieu d'en français »;

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « de réinstaurer, dès la rentrée scolaire 2012-2013, la bourse pour étudier en français. »

J'appuie cette pétition, j'y appose mon nom et je demande à Patrick de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is presently an interprovincial crossings environmental assessment study under way to locate a new bridge across the Ottawa River east of the downtown of Ottawa;

"Whereas the province of Ontario is improving the 174/417 split and widening Highway 417 from the split to Nicholas at an estimated cost of \$220 million;

"Whereas that improvement was promised to and is urgently needed by the commuters of Orléans and surrounding areas;

"Whereas the federal government has moved almost 5,000 RCMP jobs from the downtown" of Ottawa "to Barrhaven;

"Whereas the federal government is moving 10,000 Department of National Defence jobs from the downtown to Kanata;

"Whereas over half these jobs were held by residents of Orléans and surrounding communities;

"Whereas the economy of Orléans will be drastically impacted by the movement of these jobs westerly;

"Whereas additional capacity will be required for residents who will have to commute across our city to those jobs;

"We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and the Ministry of Transportation to do their part to stop this environmental assessment; and further, that the new road capacity being built on 174 and 417 be kept for Orléans and surrounding communities in Ontario; and further, that the province of Ontario assist the city of Ottawa in convincing the federal government to fund the light rail from Blair Road to Trim Road, which is much

more needed now that 15,000 jobs accessible to residents of Orléans are moved out of reach to the west.

"We, the undersigned, support this petition and affix our names hereunder."

I support this petition. I sign it and send it forward with Jacqueline.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

Thank you very much. I support this and I'm pleased to give it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Davenport.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas extracurricular activities form an important part of our students' education and benefit communities across Ontario;

"Whereas students and families are paying the price for the unnecessary and cynical political games of this government;

"Whereas we respect teachers and appreciate the time they volunteer to enrich our children's school experience;

"Whereas the Ontario government should be focusing on improving the lives of young people in our schools and supporting families across this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That this government respect the constitutional right of workers to bargain collectively, take responsibility for the crisis they have created in Ontario schools, and take steps to resolve this problem to ensure that Ontario

students can once again enjoy the benefits of extra-curricular activities in this province."

I agree with this. I'll sign my name to it and give it to page Leo.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Soo Wong: "Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas it is the right of every Canadian to vote once in each election for the candidate of his or her choice and have their vote fairly counted and not offset by faulty voter registration or any sort of illegal practices; and

"Whereas credible allegations of voting irregularities exist for the most recent election, including non-citizens voting, persons voting multiple times at various voting stations and errors on the permanent register of electors list; and

"Whereas the practice of 'vouching' has been practised in polling stations where it is not permitted, such as non-rural polling stations, and does not require verified proof of a person's age, citizenship and residence in a riding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 106, Prevention of Electoral Fraud Act, 2012, by Bas Balkissoon, the member from Scarborough—Rouge River, that would require that voters present proof of Canadian citizenship; require the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario to appoint an independent party to conduct a review of the permanent register of electors within six months after the bill passes and subsequently every five years; allow scrutineers to monitor the process by which voters add their names to the voters list on election day; and forbid vouching, which currently excludes the requirement for legitimate identification."

I fully support this petition—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Newmarket—Aurora.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition delivered by Mr. Nicholas DePencier Wright with the Animal Justice Canada legislative fund. It reads as follows:

"Call to protect Ontario's captive marine animals:

"Whereas recent concern about water quality, chronic staff shortages and poor welfare of Marineland's animals have led to the inspection of Marineland's facility; and

"Whereas no regulations exist at the provincial or federal level regarding the care of captive marine animals; and

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"Whereas ensuring the adequate protection of captive marine animals should not be dependent on individual complaints coming forward;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That regulations be passed under the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, RSO 1990, c. 36, aimed at protecting captive marine animals, including regulating how the animals are housed and are treated."

I support the petition. I'm pleased to affix my signature.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas it is the right of every Canadian to vote once in each election for the candidate of his or her choice and have their vote fairly counted and not offset by faulty voter registration or any sort of illegal practices; and

"Whereas credible allegations of voting irregularities exist for the most recent election, including non-citizens voting, persons voting multiple times at various voting stations and errors on the permanent register of electors list; and

"Whereas the practice of 'vouching' has been practised in polling stations where it is not permitted, such as non-rural polling stations, and does not require verified proof of a person's age, citizenship and residence in a riding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 106, Prevention of Electoral Fraud Act, 2012, by Bas Balkissoon, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, that would require that voters present proof of Canadian citizenship; require the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario to appoint an independent party to conduct a review of the permanent register of electors within six months after the bill passes and subsequently every five years; allow scrutineers to monitor the process by which voters add their names to the voters list on election day; and forbid vouching, which currently excludes the requirement for legitimate identification."

I support this and send it to the desk—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people who live, work and recreate on the Bruce Peninsula have concerns about the expansion of industrial wind turbine farms on the Bruce; and

"Whereas none of these people have been asked to attend meetings or provide input into decisions to expand these industrial wind turbine farms; and

"Whereas these decisions will impact on their enjoyment of their homes and reduce property values; and

"Whereas we believe the industrialization of this beautiful area by the development of industrial wind turbine installations will mean the loss and destruction of

the natural viewscape which attracts tourists and cottagers, resulting in a negative impact on tourist businesses and loss of jobs for the community;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To effect a stay on any expansion of industrial wind farms, other than the existing three, on the Bruce Peninsula."

Five thousand, one hundred and seventy signed petitions—I support them and will send them with page—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north's economy; and

"Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

"Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets at Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately."

I fully agree and send it down with page Sashin.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OPERATOR ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ D'EXPLOITATION DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 2, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts/ Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité pour fusionner la Société indépendante d'exploitation du réseau d'électricité et l'Office de l'électricité de l'Ontario, modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Further debate? The member from Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I take it that the third party and the government aren't speaking to this bill, Mr. Speaker. That's very strange. Of course, strange things happen around this place.

This bill is about the amalgamation of the Ontario electric system operator act—and it combines two organizations.

Any debate in this House dealing with electricity has to really start with Sir Adam Beck. I don't think that Ontario does enough to recognize what a great, great thing Sir Adam Beck did in his day, back in the late 1910s and early 1920s, when he put together a consortium of the Ontario government and created Ontario Hydro, harnessed the power of Niagara Falls, created an electricity grid—in those days, running from Niagara Falls through southern Ontario and along the north shore of Lake Ontario—and, with that grid, created some of the greatest economic opportunities that Ontario has literally lived off for the better part of a century now.

The rural electrification program, which put electricity into most, if not all, farms in Ontario by the mid-1950s, created a strong, vibrant, profitable agricultural sector that was well above the other agricultural areas that we were competing with, because we had electrification on the farms and they didn't. This all came about because of the foresight, the vision and the hard work of Sir Adam Beck. Any debate on electricity in this province should recognize what a great man he was.

This bill that we're debating today—I do have some concerns about this bill. One of the concerns I have is—in the explanatory note, it points out: "The board of directors of" the Ontario Electricity System Operator "is required to ensure that there is an effective separation of functions and activities of the OESO relating to its market operations and its procurement and contract management activities. The OESO is prohibited from conducting itself in a manner that could unduly advantage or disadvantage any market participant or any party to a procurement contract or interfere with, reduce or impede a market participant's non-discriminatory access to transmission systems or distribution systems. The board of directors is also required to ensure that confidentiality is maintained."

In the body of the bill, this goes on in section 6. Subsections (a) to (r)—that's 18 subsections—deal with the ability of this organization to operate above the fray. In other words, there would be no hanky-panky with the cost of electricity. That gives me concern, particularly when governments have been far too involved in the operation of the electricity system, deciding where plants go and where plants don't go. Those have been all political decisions. Politicians have not stood back and let the operation of the Ontario electrical grid be done by experts. They've been involved themselves. Yet there's this huge section in this bill that's trying to deal with making sure that the price of electricity is not manipulated in any way, shape or form. That gives me concern, when this government has had a rather poor record in that area.

The other thing that gives me concern is, when you get to section 18—after going through 18 different sections that provide for the operations to be done legally and up front and transparently, then there's section 18, which is a liability clause. I suppose that if someone does step over the line, they'd be brought to order.

It says here in the liability clause: "No action or other civil proceeding shall be commenced against a director, officer, employee or agent of the OESO or a member of a committee or panel established by the board of directors of the OESO for any act done in good faith in the exercise or performance or the intended exercise or performance of a power or duty under any act, the regulations under any act...."

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In other words, if they do something untoward—there are 18 clauses in here that say you can't do anything untoward; you should not do anything untoward. But if you do happen to do something untoward, you're exempt.

I just don't like the way the bill is written. I have great concern about going to all this length to make sure that integrity in the system is maintained, and then the liability clause exempts everybody from everything. Even the part-time employee they might hire as a consultant is exempt, too, because he was part of a panel. It just doesn't—what did the Auditor General say? It doesn't pass the smell test. So that gives me a great deal of concern as to where this bill is going and what its intentions are. I'm concerned about that.

We also have some great concern that the Ontario Power Authority is going to be merged into this body. We don't think it should be merged; we think it should be scrapped altogether. This is a body that was formed seven years ago. There were 15 people on this board, and it was a transitional body created by this government to manage Ontario's energy supply. That transitional body was to disappear once the transition from the old system to the new system was completed, but it didn't disappear. It started with 15 members; it now has 235 people on a permanent entity. There are 87 people who earned over \$100,000 a year. The CEO earns \$570,000 a year. This is a transitional body. So it hasn't been a transitional body; it has bloated itself out of control.

That's a mentality that embeds itself in an organization, and if that organization is merged with another organization, which is what this bill purports to do, the entire organization is going to take on this bureaucratic bloating of high-priced individuals who basically are making a job for themselves.

Shuffling bureaucrats down the hall and creating one super-agency certainly won't accomplish the saving of any money. The government says this is going to save us \$25 million. I will guarantee this government—I will guarantee you—that this will not save \$25 million. In fact, I will guarantee you that three years down the road, this organization will have bloated its costs, I'm going to say, 15% or 20% more than they are today, and it could very well be 25% or 30%. That's a pretty safe bet, given

the way a bureaucracy bloats itself every time you turn your back on it. Creating an organization that is going to take these high-priced, and I'm sure highly experienced, individuals and put them together—they are going to bloat the cost of this organization.

It's obvious to me that Liberals, who have bloated the size of the civil service, adding 300,000, 400,000 people to the public service of Ontario—increased bureaucracy is not a problem with them. It's a great problem for the people of Ontario, because this impacts the cost of electricity, it increases the cost of government and it increases the cost of everything we pay for. Only under this government could they take a 15-member transitional body and bloat it into a mega-bureaucracy where over 87 people earn \$100,000 a year or more. This government thinks that by merging they're going to save some money. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, there's not going to be any money saved in this merger.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to rise on the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act bill and respond to some of the comments by the member from Halton. I'd like to commend him on starting off this debate today about Sir Adam Beck, a man who fought private power interests and a man who realized that public power, power that was meant to benefit all and benefit all industry, was the future for Ontario. It was through him that the great utility that built this province, Ontario Hydro—it was due to his foresight that we witnessed and we were part of the revolutions that were made. Sadly, I think both of the other parties have forgotten, in their terms in office, that it was public power that made Ontario great.

This bill takes the OPA, which manages the private power contracts, and merges it with IESO, the people who regulate the power. That actually makes some sense: the people who buy the power merge with the people who regulate the power. But once again, they're making even less public participation, because under the old—the OPA had to go through the Ontario Energy Board to at least explain their power plans, and the people had a chance to go to a hearing and test those plans. In this act, they're ministerial plans, and there's no place for the public to participate.

We have all seen the mess that we've gotten in the power industry when ministers and politicians get involved in power plants.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in this House and speak about Bill 75. I commend the honourable member from Halton for talking about Sir Adam Beck, who was a remarkable person in the history of electricity generation in this province. We all know that he was the person who created Ontario Hydro; he was the person who created the largest and the first publicly owned utility in the world. He was a remarkable person; there's no question about that. Yesterday in my

remarks, I asked every member of this House, when they are walking along University Avenue, to stop for a moment beside his statue and to pay respect to this great Ontarian.

Our government has been following the path which was created by Sir Adam Beck in terms of creation of hydroelectricity. In Niagara Falls, the biggest tunnel in the world is under construction, which is going to produce enough electricity to light and to provide power for 160,000 homes for 100 years to come. This is one major project in the area of hydroelectricity we have been engaged in. The other project is the Lower Mattagami hydroelectric facility in northern Ontario, which is going to produce 400 megawatts of power—clean power, reliable power and inexpensive power. That is going to provide electricity for 15,000 homes. These are the projects under way in the area of hydroelectricity.

Actually, hydroelectricity is providing about 22% of our generation this year and next year, so we are doing quite well in that area.

Sir Adam Beck, as I said, was quite exemplary for our electricity generation and also power production in this province's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: It was a pleasure listening to the member from Halton. I think he summarized the argument. I refer people to the Hansard to make sure they have copies of it. There's a full description of the mess they've made of the energy system in Ontario. It's quite deplorable. It's not just on these gas-fired plants—there are five gas plants in Ontario that aren't working. They're being paid millions of dollars to produce.

The tribute to Adam Beck is a wonderful thing. The policy in Adam Beck's book was power at cost. Really, what he meant was power at any cost. It was a direct subsidy to the manufacturing environment in Ontario—that he was setting it up.

Here's the issue. On energy, the monopoly is the lines. That's the monopoly. That's the public piece. Half the system today is private—the Bruce plant is private—and there's nothing wrong with that. They make an economic business case to finance it and are paid for it. Most of the gas plants—TransAlta—are all private.

This governance model they've set up, the OPA and the IESO—they were temporary agencies. Now they've become big, bloated bureaucracies.

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Our leader, Tim Hudak, has made it very clear that we would have eliminated the bureaucracy and made energy safe, reliable and, most important, affordable, because energy is an essential commodity for the consumer. You can't live without it, so it has got to be affordable for seniors, persons with special needs etc. They are now pricing seniors out of their home. That's the plight of nine years of a government that couldn't manage a two-car funeral.

I am so disappointed and shocked by everything they've done on the energy file. It's an embarrassment to

Ontario. Adam Beck must be rolling over in his grave, listening to these people that couldn't—they can't run this place. Look, they're almost in contempt of the place on a daily basis now.

I'll speak more, later on today. Stay tuned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to rise for the first time and speak to this bill today. Actually, I agree with a number of issues, the speaking points, that the member from Durham has mentioned.

Clearly, under cover of Bill 75, designed to implement the merger of the OPA and the Independent Electricity System Operator, the government is also making wholesale changes to the way that energy is planned for and is procured in the province of Ontario. It's true, though, that the NDP does support the consolidation of Ontario's fragmented hydro agency system and agrees in principle with the government's intention to reduce and eliminate waste by merging the two agencies. I mean, on the surface, that makes a lot of sense, and I think even the public understands that it makes some sense.

However, the way that they've gone about doing this in Bill 75, by removing the independent planning and review required by the present supply planning regime—this is something that the NDP clearly does not support, and clearly members of the official opposition have issues with it as well.

Although the merger to form the Ontario Electricity System Operator may be a positive step, we in the NDP feel strongly that by eliminating the current integrated power system plan, opportunity for public and stakeholder participation in energy planning is greatly reduced. This should be a concern for everyone in this House. I think that the energy portfolio is high on the minds of Ontarians these days, and we have to make sure that this bill serves the needs of the people that we're elected to serve in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Halton has two minutes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would agree with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo that electricity should be on the minds of all members of this House. We're pricing ourselves out of the market. The member from Durham talked about seniors not being able to afford their power bills. Those are huge concerns.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, thank you very much for your kind comments. Certainly, Adam Beck was a giant in the history of this province.

I thank the member for Richmond Hill for his comments, although I have to point out to the member for Richmond Hill that the Niagara tunnel that you're talking about is a huge project. It's a year and a half late, and it has almost doubled its budget, so it has not been well managed.

This government paid a company a huge amount of money to drill test holes, to find out what kind of rock they were going to be going through. They came back with results that said, "You're going through limestone."

By and large, they were going through limestone, but unfortunately, every once in a while, they hit some shale, and when you hit shale, it caves in. So they had to go to a very expensive process of creating a cement tunnel to hold up the shale and the roof of the project. The testing that was done—with millions of dollars being spent on that testing—didn't identify the shale. The testing was done in a shoddy manner—overpaid for, not properly done.

This government is responsible for that shoddy work that was done, that has cost the taxpayers of Ontario, through their electricity system, huge amounts of money for a system that is going to produce electrical costs at well beyond the scheduled price. It's too bad, because it could have been done in a much more practical and efficient manner than was accomplished by this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Ordinarily at this point, as I begin what I have to say, I'd use the stock phrase that everybody does around here about what a pleasure it is to add my voice to the debate on whatever bill. In this particular case, it's Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, 2012, and I would say that, except it's no pleasure. It's no pleasure because I've taken a look at this bill, which has been around since the end of April, and I don't think, frankly, that it's worth the paper it's printed on. But debate on this bill is an opportunity to discuss some priorities of this Liberal government. More accurately, the Liberal government's complete lack of priorities is why I'm here debating this nonsense.

This is one of four bills left on the docket that are all in the waning days of debate. There is no new legislation being introduced. The government is obviously seized of a problem that it has that, while it pertains to energy, doesn't particularly pertain to this bill, and it's preoccupied with that rather than dealing with the exigencies of the people of Ontario.

Fifteen hours to date have been spent on a bill—this bill—that was introduced last April, as I said. It's a bill that is designed to save \$25 million; \$25 million in the overall scheme of things deserves a bill. Fifteen—now going on 16—hours of debate makes me ask myself about this valuable time and how much better it could be spent assisting Ontarians, but never mind.

Since the spring, we have been debating Bill 75, and this is a bill that seeks to merge the Ontario Power Authority with the Independent Electricity System Operator, or IESO, into one giant entity. The Ontario Power Authority was created about eight years ago—2004. It can be viewed, if you will, as the beginning of the McGuinty government's energy experiment or experiments that have together cost Ontarians millions of dollars. I say "millions of dollars"—really, hundreds of millions of dollars, and if you're really honest about it, billions of dollars. Included are countless wind farms and solar parks and rooftop arrays, contracts for endless supply that pay too much money for power that is not stored and is

therefore virtually given away with some regularity, when Ontario is actually home—and people don't generally talk about this here in this place—to what is arguably the world authority on hydrogen storage, a means and ultimately the means of storing renewable power, which right now, as I've said, we have to give away.

The Green Energy Act—debated here a couple of years ago—comes to mind because it was a lengthy and a very rancorous debate. At that time, I remember questions being asked repeatedly of the then energy minister—not to say “energy czar” at the time. He insisted that the Green Energy Act in totality would not really amount to more than about a 1% rise in the electricity bills of consumers in the province of Ontario. We're talking about individual residential bills as well as business bills.

Take a look at your bill, folks, whoever you are and wherever you are, whether you're in a business or whether you're in a home. Take a look at your bill when you sit down at the kitchen table tonight, and decide whether or not you can afford that.

At the time, the government claimed that the OPA would be a 15-person transitional body—I say “transitional body”—charged with managing Ontario's energy supply. Premier, can you say “transitional”? What is it about the word “transitional” that you don't understand?

What management this has turned out to be. Under the supervision of a variety of ministers, the OPA has presided over continuously rising energy costs. In this time, Ontario has been producing more energy than it needs, selling that energy at a loss to other jurisdictions, and making the taxpayers cover the difference. So much for 1%. Don't believe me, folks; like I said, look at your power bill. Pull it out and take a good look at it tonight. It is not just a misadventure—the energy experiments of this government. It is a business aversion from Ontario, and it is a family fear factor: That's what energy has become in the province of Ontario. What a quintessentially Liberal action plan: When in doubt, make Ontarians pay. And pay, they are.

Over the past seven years, the OPA has ballooned from a 15-person transitional body to yet another giant drain on taxpayers, employing 235 people permanently, with 87 of them earning upwards of \$100,000 and the CEO's salary set at \$570,000 per year. But don't worry, Speaker, the Premier has frozen that salary and there won't be any bonus—oh, well, there goes the Caribbean vacation. These are, after all, difficult economic times and we all have to do our part. This is a so-called transitional body that cost taxpayers \$375 million, with their expenditures rising from \$14 million in 2005 to \$76.4 million today.

1630

Here's a question for you, especially those of you who are watching on television: How has your household income done since 2005? That's what you have to ask. We're debating a bill that would put these two burgeoning organizations together in one, and we would save \$25

million if we can believe what this bill purports to represent.

Since the introduction of this bill, significant facts pertaining to the Minister of Energy and the government's energy policy have come to light. To the figures I mentioned above, we can now add \$650 million that this government wasted on the non-existent power plants in Mississauga and in Oakville. It reminds me of \$35 million that was spent on a bridge that was never built to the Toronto Islands by one-time Mayor David Miller. It's not there, that bridge, is it?

In total, this government presided over an energy experiment that is costing taxpayers, as I've said, in the billions of dollars. This so-called energy policy has been passed from minister to minister like a baton of shame in a relay race to nowhere. Now, after billions of dollars wasted, Ontario is no closer to a sustainable, reliable green energy sector than it was eight years ago. It's sad, too, because it could be. It could be.

We, on this side of the House, have been demanding that this government take Ontario's critical financial situation seriously. We have said that half measures don't pass muster. We have proposed solutions, and we've asked the Liberals to, please, cut their spending. In response, they table a bill like this, Bill 75, which they claim will save taxpayers—drum roll, please—\$25 million.

How are Ontarians to believe that their government is looking out for their best interests, that they understand the critical nature of the situation in which our province finds itself when, in view of wasting billions, the Liberal response is to start with policies that will supposedly result in \$25 million in savings? Good God, they haven't even got a legislative roster—as I've said, four bills on the docket. We're marking time and, folks, Ontario is burning.

I used the word “supposedly” because I have serious doubts that we will see any savings as a result of this bill. Savings as a result of this bill—don't believe it for a second. You see, this government wants us to believe that, as a result of the amalgamation of the OPA and the Independent Electricity System Operator, they will be giving us two agencies—a procurer and a marketer of energy—for the price of one. By the way, its acronym is OESO, O-E-S-O. It's pronounced “oh-so.” That's “Oh, so good, don't you think?”

History tells us, however, that in true Liberal fashion this government will create one agency for the price of two, maybe three, maybe four. Only this government can justify keeping a black hole of spending like the OPA in existence, no matter what its form, no matter what it's called. Had the minister been serious about a solution, he would have proposed a bill that would eliminate the OPA altogether. He would also push his government to do what we've been asking for for years, and that is, the complete review of each and every single government agency with the goal of fixing those that don't work and eliminating those that aren't necessary. Instead, we get another meaningless bill.

They like to say that we left the grid in disrepair. It's not so—oh, so not so. There may have been brownouts. That's true, but back then, unemployment wasn't chronically at 8%, and we actually did have heavy industry and jobs in the province of Ontario that consumed electricity, and oh, prices were oh so much lower.

So this bill, I'm here standing and talking about it, but this bill has no legs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I remember actually being on Welland city council and being the mayor of the city of Welland during some parts of deregulation. I also remember sitting on the hydro board, as a member of the hydro board, before deregulation, and rates were oh so much lower even then than they were, frankly, under the Harris government.

Then I heard the member from Halton speaking about the current CEO making in excess of \$400,000, and 87 or 100 employees making over \$100,000. Certainly, our party platform—we've been saying all along during this last year that we think CEO salaries need to be capped.

However, that brought to my mind, when he was talking about that, the name Eleanor Clitheroe, so I googled her. She, of course—

Interjection: Didn't we get rid of her?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, you got rid of her.

She, of course, was the CEO of Hydro One at the time. She got hired under the Harris government, and I think she got fired under the Eves government, but not until she had made \$2.2 million. Today, she is still trying to increase her \$25,000-a-month pension to a \$33,000-a-month pension—for somebody who only worked a couple of years at Hydro One.

Interjection: She's a pastor now—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes.

CEO salaries need to be capped. Hydro was far better off before it was deregulated. This bill is doing a little something to perhaps try and save some money and to get some efficiencies. But this whole deregulation thing made a few people rich, and it made the rest of us pay much higher hydro bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Comments?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I did want to make a brief comment. As mayor of the city of Ottawa for six years, I was an active board member of Hydro Ottawa. For two and a half or three years before I came back to this place in a by-election, I was a member of the board of IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator.

It's a very complex business. One of the responsibilities of the IESO is to manage the import and export of electricity. It has a legal relationship with all its adjoining jurisdictions: Manitoba, Quebec, New York, Michigan. Ontario is part of that, and there are legally enforceable rules in terms of how they move electricity and support each other when they have shortages or surpluses of electricity.

Just to correct the record, Mr. Speaker, on the issue of importing and exporting electricity from the province of

Ontario and into the province of Ontario: Yes, there are times when we have given it away and we sell it away at less than the cost of production. But on the other hand, we also sell it often at profit. For all of the three and a half years that I was a member of that board, we had a net profit on the import and export of electricity of \$400 million, cumulative, over those years. IESO has generally created a profit for itself on the import and export of electricity.

It's very easy to create an urban myth when we know that we're giving or selling it away cheap, and not putting in the other side of the equation when we sell it at a profit. When you match the low sales to the positive sales, the IESO has had a spectacular record of creating a profit for the benefit of the IESO and for the benefit of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have to say, just briefly, on this Bill 75, I can't believe the gall of the energy minister to continue to have this bill on the floor of the House, especially after all that has been going on in the last number of weeks regarding the fiasco in the energy business, the energy policy, with this Liberal government.

We can see how these boards were constructed to provide some arm's-length distance from ministerial or political interference or influence. I'll speak more about this when it's my turn for debate, but this bill goes directly—I would say it's nefarious in its wording. It's deceptive in its application. This bill says that the minister will provide all the influence and interference in the direction of energy policy. It also shields the minister from any scrutiny. Even the regulatory component of this bill, the regulations, are deemed not to be regulations, so that the Legislature does not have any oversight.

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It also goes so far as to prevent the Statutory Powers Procedure Act from being applied to this new monster ABC that's being created, and it also prevents any remedy through the civil courts for any of the actions by this agency. I really would like everybody on the Liberal benches to read this bill. Forget the talking points; put the talking points away. Read the bill and see what you're creating. You're creating another fiasco.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, it's fun getting up and talking about the bill. It's important to state some of the highlights and good points about this bill, which is an attempt at consolidating some of the services and administration costs. Those are some of the things we were successful in actively campaigning on. It's a good idea. It's a good initiative. It's something that is tangible, that will definitely bring savings to constituents back home. People understand repetitive services, and if you eliminate some of it, it will bring some savings. The actual dollar figure that those savings are going to bring is something we can actually discuss if we can get this bill moved into committee.

The biggest concern that happens in this proposed piece of legislation is the removal of the independent planning and review board. That's the biggest concern that is happening here. We shouldn't be excluding the public from providing their input in this entire process. We should be encouraging that. I find myself repeating myself; I think I heard myself say this about three times, and I'm saying it in a different way. Anyway, we should be bringing more people to the table and not excluding them, so we can scrutinize some of the actions that are happening here by this government and through this process.

But no, what we're doing—and what we're not learning—is once again we're giving more powers to the minister to make some of these decisions. What has happened in this House over the past three or four weeks—haven't we learned from that process? We really need to look at getting this right. We have the opportunity of doing it.

Mr. Speaker, again, it's a joy. I think I'll have another opportunity to speak about this today, and I look forward to that opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Thornhill has two minutes.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you as well to my colleagues from Welland, Algoma-Manitoulin, Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and to the Minister of Infrastructure for their comments. In response to what the member from Algoma-Manitoulin has to say—he talks about liking the idea of consolidating for saving money. Frankly, so do I. This, however, is a drop in the bucket at best, and at worst it's nothing. When you go and do this kind of consolidation, the question becomes, what is it that the consumer saves, versus what the consumer has spent on the experiments of this government in the green energy sector and on buying power stations that aren't really there?

Add those kinds of things and the global adjustment—things like that and the HST—to the power bills of the average Ontario business and the average Ontario resident and you've got a disaster on your hands. I suggest that we do. He also talks about what we're going to do about getting the bill into committee. I would ask the same question, because it's pretty hard to get a bill into committee when you don't have any committees.

As far as the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is concerned, he calls the bill—I think the word was “nefarious.” I don't know if I can exactly concur on the word, but I can certainly agree with my colleague that this is a difficult bill to comprehend in terms of why it's here, which was the substance of what I had to say.

The Minister of Infrastructure talks about the fact that from time to time we sell electricity out of the jurisdiction at a profit. Since the government has not been able to cap the news leaking out about how many millions we're spending on wasted electricity that we have to sell at a huge loss, particularly on weekends, I would be very interested if you would show us by publicizing

when you actually sell electricity from the province of Ontario at a profit. That's what we have to see. Then we'll start to have a real dialogue about how electricity is created and delivered and sold in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Bill 75 is before us for debate. I'll start off my comments by saying that effective public policy requires oversight and remedies. This Liberal proposal for an Ontario Electricity System Operator explicitly excludes oversight, remedies and accountability, and in my view it is very deceptive. It would seem that they're setting themselves up for another billion-dollar boondoggle.

The act specifically makes OESO not a crown agency, yet it retains all the authorities, attributes and characteristics of a crown agency. Just for the record, I'll read in the definition under the Crown Agency Act: “‘Crown agency’ means a board, commission, railway, public utility ... manufactory, company or agency, owned, controlled or operated by Her Majesty in right of Ontario, or by the government of Ontario, or under the authority of the Legislature or the Lieutenant Governor in Council.” We'll show that that is exactly what is created with OESO.

OESO, if it's dissolved—the crown assumes all its debts and liabilities. The Liberals can set up a profit for their friends under this bill, but the broke Ontario taxpayer will be left footing the bill.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll refer the members to page 6. Maybe the Attorney General would like to read page 6, sections 7 and 8:

“If the OESO is dissolved, any property of the OESO remaining after the payment of all of its debts and liabilities is vested in the crown in right of Ontario.

“8. The OESO is not an agent of the crown for any purpose, despite the Crown Agency Act.” Specifically, they've excluded it.

Though it's not a crown agency, the minister appoints the board of directors. I'll ask my Liberal friends to go to section 9. OESO's board of directors—“at least eight and not more than 10 additional individuals appointed by the minister.” That's right out of the act, Attorney General. Take a read through it.

Though it's not a crown agency, the Lieutenant Governor in Council can delegate any of the powers to anyone. I'll ask them to read pages 10 and 11, clauses 22(a), (b) and (c) and section 23, and they will see that all authorities can be delegated to anyone under this act.

Though it's not a crown agency, OESO can make regulations and bylaws. It can charge and establish fees. Go to page 9, section 21, and you'll see that that authority is granted. It also specifically excludes the regulations of OESO as being regulations. They cannot come back before this House for scrutiny. Why is that, I'll ask the Attorney General? Why is that, I'll ask the Liberal benches?

Though it's not a crown agency, the minister shall ensure energy plans are online, shall refer an energy plan

to the board, may give directions etc. It's not a crown agency except for the fact that the minister controls it. Read page 11, sections 23 and 24, as well as section 25.30, and you'll see just what sort of monster you're creating with this act.

They've set up an organization, directed by the minister or from the Premier, and we don't have any oversight as elected officials or the people of this province. They have explicitly excluded the possibility for oversight. They've neutered the Legislature. The Premier and the ministers are, in effect, chameleons with this bill. OESO—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark, I think that's a bit of a stretch. You'll withdraw that comment.

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Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It sounded so nice and warm-blooded.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It didn't sound nice to me.

Mr. Randy Hillier: OESO can make bylaws that operate the same as regulations, except they're explicitly not regulations under this act. Go to sections 21 and 25, and we'll see. That's 25.30 through to 25.30(7). The act states that OESO is not subject to the Statutory Powers Procedure Act or to anyone related. Subsection 3(1) of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act says the act applies to "the exercise of a statutory power of decision conferred by or under an act of the Legislature...."

If we go to page 14, there it is, 25.6: "The Statutory Powers Procedure Act does not apply to a proceeding before the OESO, its board of directors or any committee, panel, person or body to which a power or duty has been delegated...." How's that for accountability?

I want to quote from the Ontario Royal Commission Inquiry into Civil Rights: "The provisions of the [Statutory Powers Procedure] Act should apply to all tribunals, bodies or persons exercising judicial or administrative powers where fair procedure is required." The Liberals have disregarded that.

If OESO uses its power to make laws and fees, something it can do with this legislation, we have no oversight, and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act does not apply. If ratepayers have a problem at OESO, they can't appeal it. They don't even receive the basic rules enacted by the statute. If they have a problem, they do not receive the benefit of such basic principles as a notice of hearing, adjournments, counsel, examination of evidence, official notices. None of those are applicable to OESO. Also, OESO is not subject to freedom of information. Without the application of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, there is no way for any of us to oversee or have recourse against this agency.

But, Speaker, it's even worse than that. The act states that OESO cannot be compelled to testify. It shall not be required to give testimony, and that you can find on page 8, subsection 15(2): "A member of a panel established

for the purpose of resolving or attempting to resolve a dispute ... shall not be required in any civil proceeding to give testimony...."

It goes on to further provide complete immunity for OESO from any civil action. "No ... proceeding shall be commenced against a director, officer, employee or agent of the OESO or a member of a committee or panel established by" it. That's under subsection 18(1). No action or civil proceedings shall be commenced against OESO. How's that for accountability and transparency and remedies?

This legislation requires far more explanation. OESO is a government organization. Let's call it what it is; it is a crown agency. We can't opt out of it. We can't compete with it. We need oversight. We need recourse. We need remedies. This is, in my view, nefarious. An agency is being set up by the government that is not a crown agency, yet it has all the same powers—an agency that is being set up without any oversight, remedy or recourse. The minister runs it, but we can't oversee it, and he can use it for camouflage.

The last time a minister was running our power system, the taxpayers got caught with billions of dollars in pointless spending. Power plants such as Oakville and Mississauga are the result. The last time we allowed any agency of the crown this little oversight, taxpayers were on the hook for \$1 billion for overpriced helicopters.

Speaker, this bill is setting up and creating another Chris Mazza with OESO now. You're looking to deliberately create another boondoggle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments, the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane—sorry, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you. I hear my riding is big, Mr. Speaker, but I didn't think that the federal boundary distribution was affecting us yet in the province. I know that it won't. But I know that the Timiskaming-Cochrane area is very well represented by my friend here.

Again, on the note the prior speaker just finished off on, it's common sense. If we look at the changes that are happening here, we're looking at withdrawing or removing some of the transparency. What I mean by transparency is the opportunity for the public to speak, suggest, provide information, question and actually participate in this process. That's key. That's what we have as a safeguard to make sure we get our views, our points, our suggestions, and what matters to us across, to make sure they're properly looked at, considered, taken into account, investigated. That's part of the process. By removing that process, Mr. Speaker, we're definitely going to find ourselves once again in some very difficult times.

It has been very difficult, I'll be frank with you, Mr. Speaker, as a newly elected MPP. It hasn't always been an enjoyable process, over the course of the last little while, seeing some of the discussions that have gone on in here. But we can prevent a recurrence of that by making this right.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Oh, that's no way to talk about your caucus members there.

Mr. Michael Mantha: You'll have an opportunity to speak in a second. I can cross over and we can have a chat after.

Anyway, we can prevent that stuff from happening by making sure we have the right mechanisms in place to prevent that from happening.

Again, it's still early in the day, and I think I'll have another two minutes later. I'll enjoy speaking to this motion a little bit later and hopefully make another point that needs to be made, which is making sure we don't fall into the same traps we've fallen into by taking away the accountability of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin and his observance of a slight error. Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Again, it's a pleasure to rise in this House and speak to Bill 75, the amalgamation of the two electricity agencies, the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, and also in response to remarks by the honourable member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

We actually listened to the comments and were asked by the NDP to amalgamate the electricity system agencies, and that's what we are doing, actually. We are combining the two agencies, the OPA and the Independent Electricity System Operator.

Last year we asked Ontario agencies to come up with a plan to make some savings and efficiencies in their operation, and they actually came up with savings of \$1 billion, which is quite considerable. By the amalgamation of these two agencies, Ontario is going to save \$25 million. That is also a considerable amount of savings for taxpayers and ratepayers.

This new bill, if it passes in this House, is going to create one single agency which is going to be responsible for market operations in Ontario in relation to the electricity sector. It will also be responsible for creating opportunities to make efficiencies in contract management, and will streamline the electricity system agencies and operations in terms of administration in Ontario. Also it will create a system which will be more responsive to the changing situation in our electricity system.

Since we came to office, in the past nine years our electricity system has been changed. There has been enormous progress in that area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Mantha): Further questions and comments?

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Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to speak to this bill. I'd like to applaud my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for being able to root through this murky piece of legislation to find out and determine that it provides for a complete lack of accountability and oversight. This is a rather scary and ominous thing to think of when we have a government

that has done things before that have resulted in things like Ornge, which amounted to a huge scandal, a huge waste of money. We had eHealth, more huge waste of money, and we've had Presto. All these experiences were negative, were expensive and ended up with hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions, being wasted.

This bill is claiming to merge two organizations into one and give it a new name, but putting two old organizations together and giving them a new name doesn't create anything new; it's just an old organization under a new name, under the false pretense of trying to save some money—I wouldn't say it's a false pretense, but a suspect pretense. The \$25 million, in the big picture of what we are looking at here, with all those other scandals that we spoke about, the debt we that have in this province, is really minuscule. Never has anything been made bigger and created economies or savings; it always goes the other way, especially now that we see that written into this legislation is the elimination of accountability and oversight. We see already an organization that was temporary or transitional in nature, where they started out with 15 people and now they have 235 people. Salaries have ballooned and blossomed. Their budget has gone from \$14 million a year to \$76 million a year.

What we have here is a piece of legislation that is totally flawed and not going to achieve any benefit for the taxpayer, and I would say we have to strike this down and vote it down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Mantha): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to talk a bit about the public and stakeholder participation piece as it relates to our everyday life in our constituency offices.

Since deregulation and the process of energy marketers, I don't know about any of you that are here today, but every week we have someone in the constituency office who has signed up inadvertently with an energy marketer who has been at the door of one of our constituents asking to see their current hydro bill or their current gas bill. I think that we need to do some work around that piece, because our constituents are being forced, in these energy contracts, to pay sometimes as much as five times what the per cubic metre rate is on the gas bills, and much higher electricity prices as well, when they are actually signing up with these various energy marketers. Just like we did with cellphone charges, I think we need to go back and deal with these energy marketers and make sure that the constituents in my riding and in the rest of your ridings are protected.

That happened as part of deregulation, which I don't agree, and my party has never agreed, was a good thing. So the piece about public stakeholder participation, consultation and communication is certainly a piece that's going to need to be added back into the bill to make sure that that communication piece and stakeholder piece is enveloped in the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? That's it?

We're going to go back to the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for a two-minute response.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the members from Welland, Carleton-Mississippi Mills, Richmond Hill, and Algoma-Manitoulin for their participation in this debate.

It does disappoint me that nobody on the Liberal side responded to any of my questions or comments regarding this bill and the failings of it. I think they were too busy reading their menus from Pizza Nova instead of reading the bill. Had they had a copy of the bill here in the House, they could have actually looked at the relevant sections instead of the Pizza Nova menu.

I will say this: We have seen the failings of this government. We see it very clearly in my riding with the introduction of the proposed TransCanada gas plant. A 900-megawatt gas-fired plant is going to be built at the cost of \$1.5 billion or more, right beside an existing gas-fired 2,100-megawatt plant, owned by OPG, that sits doing nothing; it idles. It's used at less than 1% of its capacity. They could flip the switch, and give us 2,100 megawatts of power in this province—

Ms. Cindy Forster: But we don't need it.

Mr. Randy Hillier: But we don't need it. Instead of flipping that switch, they're going to build a \$1.5-billion gas-fired plant right beside the one that is essentially in mothballs. All they have to do is flip a switch, but we can tell the lights are not on. There are some people home over there, but the lights are not on—not at all.

This energy policy is just going to be creating more and more breaches of privilege with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise to speak to Bill 75, an act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, and amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority.

For years, our caucus has been warning about the cost of hydro spiralling out of control. For years, the Liberal government has made energy policy without any regard to the impact on the people who pay the bills: families, seniors and businesses. As we've seen recently, many of their decisions had much more to do with politics than with the cost of hydro or regard for the people of Ontario. Finally, they seem to have acknowledged that there's a problem, but unfortunately, they put forward a bill which won't produce any real savings.

We believe the Ontario Power Authority should not be merged, but simply scrapped altogether. It was formed seven years ago as a 15-person transitional body created by the McGuinty government to manage Ontario's energy supply. Today it's a 235-person permanent entity where 87 people earn over \$100,000 and the CEO, as has been mentioned here before, earns \$570,000.

You can give them whatever job title you want and change the name of the organization on their business card, but you'll still have trouble explaining to the seniors who pay their hydro bills why we need all these

people. In just seven years, the Ontario Power Authority has burned through \$375 million in expenditures and its expenses have risen from \$14 million in 2005 to \$76.4 million today. Shuffling bureaucrats down the hall and creating one super-agency shows that the government still doesn't recognize the severity of Ontario's debt crisis. The government has claimed that it will save money but has yet to show us how it plans to do that.

The PC caucus believes that we need to address waste. That's why we put forward a proposal to review all government agencies: to fix those that are broken and get rid of those, like the OPA, that are unnecessary. Mr. Speaker, that would actually produce savings. We believe that energy policy must be considered as an economic policy. The government needs to consider the cost and impact of their policy decisions before they charge ahead.

As I mentioned earlier, the OPA was set up to manage the energy supply. Let's look and see how that's working. A few weeks ago, there was an article in the Toronto Star that announced that Ontario is ending the practice of paying other jurisdictions to take Ontario's excess power. If that was an option all along, why have we been paying out \$10 million a year to get other people to take our power? Ten million dollars a year—that's an average of \$200,000 a week that we have just been giving away so that they would take our power. That means that since the ministry introduced this bill that is supposed to reduce the cost of hydro, we have spent approximately \$4,383,562 to unnecessarily have someone take our excess power. That doesn't sound like reducing costs to me.

If you don't need to pay the people in other jurisdictions to take the power, why did the article say that we are still paying large power consumers within Ontario to take the hydro when there's an excess?

Let's put that in perspective. The large consumers of power are likely to be manufacturers who have production lines. It seems unlikely that they are going to be able to call in hundreds more workers on short notice and increase their consumption of power just because the wind started blowing and resulted in excess power in the grid.

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The article went on to say, "The IESO has also decided to block payments to energy traders who offer to import power over wires that are already at capacity. The traders then collect fees, even though no additional power can be delivered." This, Mr. Speaker, is managing our electricity system. Why have the people of Ontario been paying fees to traders who aren't supplying any power? If the government was serious about reducing hydro costs, why haven't they already addressed that? It seems a lot like the deal the government made with TransCanada where they promised to pay them \$280 million a year even if they don't produce any power.

Clearly, this government has no real plan for the energy sector. It insisted that power plants had to be located near residences in Oakville and Mississauga in spite of objections from the community, only to move the

plants at the last minute in an attempt to save seats during the recent election. In fact, the Mississauga announcement came halfway through the campaign, and the people of Ontario watched for days and weeks as the building continued, despite the fact that the government had finally acknowledged it wasn't the right place for the plant—each day watching as more and more of their money was spent on a plant that wasn't going to be built. The cost we know about so far for the political decision to move the two plants is \$640 million, more than 25 times what the minister claims this bill would save. It makes it hard to believe the Liberals when they say they're trying to save money on hydro. And those are only the costs we know about today.

The documents that the Liberals released included many sections that were blanked out and many missing pages. So the people of Ontario still don't know how much it will cost them for the Liberals to save those few seats.

I think part of what is so disturbing about this mess is the lack of regard for the people of Ontario, that the Liberals still don't believe taxpayers deserve all the information, and they're only prepared to hand over edited documents. They didn't listen to the people when they raised their concerns about the location and safety of the plants. They charged ahead making commitments that taxpayers are now paying for. They only changed their mind on the locations when there were Liberal seats at risk. Mr. Speaker, they're still trying to hide information about the decision and its impact. I hope that the McGuinty government will do the right thing and release the rest of the documents, this time with no deleted pages and blanked out sections. The people of Ontario deserve the full truth, and they deserve a government that will consider the impact of decisions on hydro users rather than election results.

Mr. Speaker, there's one thing in this bill that I was pleased to see. It addresses how the Minister of Energy is to go about submitting an energy plan for the province's long-term energy needs—finally, an acknowledgement by the Liberal government that they have no plan.

They made the lack of a plan clear in their disastrous green energy experiments. They claimed that the FIT program would create long-term stability for green energy, but the McGuinty government introduced the program at such an unsustainably high rate that it wasn't long before they had to lower their own rate. Clearly, the government didn't have a plan.

Then they discovered that they had approved solar panel applications in areas where there was no capacity in the grid. People have gone to the expense of applying and installing a solar panel only to find that they can't hook into the grid and get a return on their investment. Clearly, the government has no plan.

In fact, last year, I asked the Minister of Energy, through an order paper question, to provide the number of participants in Oxford who have received a conditional acceptance from the OPA but are unable to connect to the grid due to insufficient capacity. I received a long answer

of all the good things they claim they've done, but he couldn't provide the number of people waiting to connect to the grid. I also asked him to provide the number of farmers who have conditional acceptances and are unable to connect to the grid due to insufficient capacity. Not only could the minister not provide the number, I received the exact same letter as to the other question.

We know from the government's own document, the 2010 fall economic statement, that the cost of hydro is forecast to increase by 46%. The document clearly states that the majority of those costs are due to the Green Energy Act. We don't know how much more it will increase as a result of decisions relocating the Mississauga and Oakville plants.

Mr. Speaker, we've all heard from people in our ridings about the impact of spiralling hydro costs. I've heard from seniors who are worried about the increases continuing—that they won't be able to stay in their homes—and from families who are having to sacrifice other expenses because of their hydro bills.

I've also heard from business about the fact that the cost of doing business in Ontario just continues to increase. In my last survey, 95% of businesses responded and said they have been impacted by increased hydro costs, and 60% indicated that it was a significant impact. The increasing cost of doing business is forcing companies and jobs out of Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

While it is a positive step that the McGuinty government is finally starting to acknowledge the fact that their policies are driving up the cost of hydro, this bill is more about public relations and window dressing. It doesn't address the cost of smart meters, the cost of green energy or the cost of mismanagement such as paying people to take our power.

The minister should withdraw this bill and introduce one that actually impacts and reduces the cost of hydro in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, I'm speaking on the Ontario electrical systems act and responding to the member for Oxford. There are some things that we do agree on and some we don't.

I'm not sure the government doesn't have a plan. I think we will agree that they're very bad plans. I think that's one thing that the right and the left can agree on.

One of the things that they forgot in their planning is that if you drive the price of electricity high enough, you will lose jobs. I heard a member on the other side that he would debate anyone that that's not the case. I've got one word for him, and that's Xstrata. Xstrata in Timmins closed because our hydro was twice what it was in Quebec. It gave the government a chance to try and put an industrial hydro rate in. But no, it didn't; it moved. Hydro producers, electrical producers, in my region, because Xstrata was such a big user, have overcapacity, and they're wondering if they're going to get a contract.

To the Minister of Transportation, who says that we make money selling—I know people in IESO, and the

regulation is very, very complicated. Those people deserve to make a lot of money because they do a really complicated job. I've got no problem with that.

Mr. John O'Toole: With \$600,000?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm not saying the guys at the top, but the guys who actually do the work do a crucial job. But when we shut plants down and when we let water go over the dams, no one's going to tell me that we're making big money exporting hydro. You have to tell the whole story—both sides.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise in response to the comments made by the honourable member from Oxford and also the honourable member from the third party.

Mr. Speaker, there has been some discussion in this House with regard to excess power. The thing is that you can't store electricity; when electricity is produced, it has to be consumed.

Our province of Ontario used to be a net exporter of electricity before 1990. During the NDP rule for five years and the Conservative rule for eight years, in those 13 years, the production capacity of electricity in the province of Ontario came down by 6%. As a result, we became a net importer of electricity from the United States and from neighbouring provinces in our own country, Canada. For example, in one year during Conservative rule, we imported over \$1 billion in electricity from the United States.

What happens, Mr. Speaker, is that when we need electricity, we import electricity from our neighbours, and when they need our electricity, we export our electricity to them. As a result, we become either a net exporter of electricity or a net importer of electricity.

I'm glad to report to this House that the province of Ontario is now a net exporter of electricity. We have enough power in this province to feed our industry, to warm our houses in northern Ontario and in southern Ontario and to cool our houses and buildings in southern Ontario during hot summer days. We've never had a single minute of power outage, blackout or brownout in the past few years. We have created, Mr. Speaker, 10,000 new megawatts of capacity in our system. This is a major achievement of this province in the past nine years in the electricity sector. I am so proud to be a member of this government: that our electricity system is in a good, perfect state and we are making good progress.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I have to respect the member from Oxford. I would say he summarized, in the general sense, the complete lack of any plan—which I think we are all concurring with, including the member that just spoke. The Green Energy Act: What a dismal mix of social policy with economic policy.

The third thing is the yet-unresolved "smart meter"—un-smart meter. It's really time-of-use, where they double the cost of electricity at peak times. That's

basically what they did, and they called it a smart meter. A smart meter is when you can phone my cottage and turn on the heaters. That's a smart meter. You do it through your circuit.

I want to say this, though: I think he covered—the last minister is wrong. They said today in question period that they've stopped coal. What they did—coal is peaking power. The baseload is nuclear, the peaking power is coal and there are five gas plants in Ontario that are fully manned and that are never used. Five plants; gas plants today that aren't used. Why aren't they used? The biggest user of energy is the economy; 70% of all electrons are consumed by refining fuels, the forestry industry, melting steel, manufacturing. That's 70% of all—but there's no economy. There are 600,000 families without income. Why? Because our pricing of electricity, the electricity plan is all wrong. We're not a net exporter of power, as you described it. We are net exporters of power we can't use. It's called green energy. When it's dispatched, we must buy it. When we buy it, we have to take power off the system, so we give it to Quebec. We could never afford—Quebec would never buy our power. Their power is half our price. And Manitoba—Winnipeg is hydroelectric power. It's cheaper than ours. You should read the file. It's not a social policy, it's an economic policy, and you've screwed it up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to address an issue that actually hasn't really come up in this conversation—although, for the love of humanity, what else can you say about this? I mean, I know it's early days for me to be saying stuff like that.

The first reading, actually—the energy critic, Peter Tabuns, explained to the House that in the past, to assess the power plans for Ontario, one needed an environmental assessment, something that wasn't acted on. To me, this seems as though it would be extremely helpful. You would think it would be common sense, before moving ahead with such a project, to speak to the individuals affected, to consult with the experts, to do the background research. Presenting the facts to the decision-makers would actually be highly beneficial; it would actually serve the general public at large, not to mention that it would give us the knowledge to make the right decisions with all the right facts.

For a plan this large, for the amalgamation of something of this importance, we, the NDP, believe that such consultation should absolutely be required, and the public is paying attention to the power portfolio, to the energy portfolio. They're paying attention for the wrong reasons, in many respects, because there is a confidence issue, I think, on this portfolio. But the public is interested in the power issue, so let's engage the public in a conversation.

This bill diminishes the extent to which we assess power planning in Ontario, and that actually should be a concern for all of us. Yet again, it gives the minister more power to determine the parameters of the questions for the OEB. Again, that is of great concern to us. We know

from many clear examples this year, and just recently, what happens when you give the ministers more power and shut out the public. The public want to be part of this conversation. They are concerned about the cost of power. Let's open the doors and have them be part of the conversation as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford has two minutes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Timiskaming-Cochrane, Richmond Hill, Durham and Kitchener-Waterloo for their comments.

Going back to my presentation, the number one issue was the fact that the government doesn't seem to have any plan for what they're doing in the energy field. The explanations that we keep hearing from the government side when they take a few minutes to speak is that they have stopped the brownouts, supposedly, that were there by building this capacity. If this was the plan, they would have noticed that the original plan was to build this plant in Oakville where maybe the power was needed, maybe that's where there's still enough industry to consume the power. But when you move it from there and build it beside a plant that was mentioned by one of my colleagues from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—they're building it right beside a gas plant that hasn't been running all this time, which you said you didn't need. So why would you need another plant beside that one? That just doesn't make sense. What I think is, if you had a plan, you've put it in the drawer some place, and you're not looking at it because it just doesn't work.

The other thing, of course, is that when you move the plant there, in order to get the power back to where you originally, supposedly, planned to put the plant, you have to build transmission lines. Recognizing that the plant that's sitting there now doesn't have enough transmission lines to get its power to Toronto or it could have got it here, now you have to build the lines for a plant that's already there producing, and you're spending \$1.5 billion or whatever it is to build a plant that will never be needed there. It's needed elsewhere.

Now, if you're suggesting that you're going to move all the users—and maybe that's your intent—that you have in Toronto and see if we can get them to locate in eastern Ontario where we have an abundance of electricity now, I don't think that's the answer. I think you're going to need some power in Toronto, and you haven't designed anything to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I stand in my place today to speak to Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and make complementary amendments to other Acts.

The Minister of Energy has put this bill forward on behalf of a government that's up to its neck in scandals. The latest scandal involves millions wasted on bad decisions in the Ministry of Energy. So, Mr. Speaker,

you'll forgive me if I am extremely circumspect of this government's recommendations on how to fix any aspect of how government works, most particularly when it comes to energy.

On its surface, the purpose of Bill 75 is to reduce the cost of operating two organizations by merging them. The Ontario Power Authority, or OPA, and the Independent Electricity System Operator, or IESO, are planned to be amalgamated. This move is supposed to save \$25 million. It seems questionable whether this attempt to reduce costs is worthwhile at all. This merger does not reduce the number of employees or create significant savings anywhere. Who knows if we will end up saving any money? This government's budget forecasting leaves a lot to be desired.

When the OPA was started seven years ago, it had 15 employees. Today, the OPA employs 235 people, 87 of whom earn over \$100,000, and the CEO takes home \$570,000. In seven years, the OPA has spent \$375 million with little to show for it. Expenses for this government agency have risen from \$14 million in 2005 to over \$76 million today.

Originally, the government set up the OPA as a transitional body. If Bill 75 passes, this temporary measure will continue to haunt us for years to come. Instead of giving it new life with this proposed merger, the Ontario Power Authority should be scrapped. It does not give us value for money. It does not save us money, but only tries to find new ways of spending millions of new money from electricity ratepayers. The rates keep going up and up and up.

Ontario's electricity production plan is a financial failure. The Green Energy Act's incentives for wind and solar power producers are outrageously expensive. The government pays up to 10 times the going rate for electricity to these producers. How could the government ever propose such an irresponsible plan? It's totally unsustainable; we knew that from the start. Some estimates put the cost of this program at \$80 billion over 20 years. What an irresponsible way to mortgage the future of Ontarians.

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The windmills popping up all over rural Ontario are unsightly, unwanted, inefficient and unaffordable. Communities are forced to accept wind towers and solar panels that are an eyesore and are not wanted by local residents. Good farmland is lost to solar farms. There are even questions about the health implications of placing wind towers too close to homes.

Ontario pays high subsidized prices, up to 80 cents per kilowatt hour, which are unaffordable. The global adjustment charge on industrial hydro bills is to cover the increase in electricity costs resulting from the high cost of solar and wind power. This global adjustment charge is driving up the cost of electricity to the highest level in any state or province in North America. Businesses are leaving Ontario because of the high cost in electricity. People are losing their jobs. New businesses are choosing not to set up business in Ontario because of high electricity costs.

We need to cancel the Green Energy Act. That will save us tens of billions of dollars over the next 20 years. Why doesn't the government's energy plan include buying electricity from Quebec? Hydroelectric power from James Bay is cheap, it's Canadian, it's affordable and it's green.

Why did the government plan to build electricity plants in Mississauga and Oakville? We didn't need them. We have a surplus of electricity that we sell to New York and Quebec at a loss every year. And now we are committed to building the plants at Lennox power station and in Lambton. What a waste of money.

If you talk to people in the energy industry, they agree that the urgent problem is not generation of electricity. We have a surplus. The problem is transmitting the electricity across our province. Right now, we have more than enough north-south lines; we need new transmission lines to go east and west. We need lines to carry our electricity to the people who need it in the corners of our province. This is a problem that festers under this government.

Now taxpayers are stuck with the cost of cancelling the Mississauga and Oakville electricity plants. The cost of this mistake is \$650 million and growing. For what? For nothing. What a waste—a waste of taxpayer money. Billions and billions slip away through the government's fingers like water over Niagara Falls. But the word "waste" is all too familiar when we think of this government. Think Ornge, \$700 million; think Presto, \$500 million and growing; think eHealth, \$2 billion and nothing to show for it. What a waste.

Mr. Speaker, this government has demonstrated a consistent inability to manage taxpayer money in a responsible and accountable manner. The blatant and massive waste of billions of taxpayer dollars has to stop. We are broke. We are heading for a \$400-billion debt, and the government is unable to control the deficit.

As a comparison, the state of California is \$390 billion in debt. They have 33 million people. That works out to around \$12,000 per person. To attack their debt, the state government reduced funding to colleges and universities by 20% to save half a billion per year. San Diego shut down eight of 48 fire engines for two years. They shut down libraries and community centres to half time, staying open for 20 hours a week. California is reducing public pension plans. The list goes on. They're implementing many more spending reductions. They are doing something.

What are we doing here in Ontario? Nothing. We keep spending like everything is okay. Our Ontario debt is \$20,000 per person and growing. Everything is not okay. We are following the road to Greece. We are spending too much money, and it has to stop.

It will take a long time, it will be painful, but all Ontarians will have to shoulder the burden of this debt. Such is the price of bad government, such is the cost of this government's irresponsible decision-making on our behalf.

This bill does not change that. It does not turn over a new leaf. It's more of the same. Mr. Speaker, this bill

will not solve our problem of big spending. It takes two organizations and puts them into one office and gives them a new name. An old product with a new name is not change. This bill will not reduce spending. We must vote no to this bill because it is ineffective, like this Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for providing me the opportunity to sit where you sit in that wonderful chair of yours. In the brief moment I was there, trying to match the skills that you've demonstrated to this House by the respect that you've shown in this House, the order that you've kept this House in and actually the focus that you've kept us in, it has given me a different perspective in regard to the role you play here as Speaker, and really I commend you for keeping us focused and keeping us moving forward in this House. I want to thank you very much. If ever the opportunity presents itself, I would only hope that I can do as good a job as you do.

Now, back to this particular piece of legislation: In my prior role or in my many roles and my many hats that I've worn through my lifetime and my career as a labour representative, when we sat down and had many discussions with management across the table, one of the first things that we talked about when we were at labour-management meetings was costs and the biggest costs, myself coming from the forestry sector, dealt with energy.

Again, I've heard from other members that we need to get in line with what exactly happened from the 2007 era in the forest industry—not only to the forest industry but also in the mining sector where we've lost so many jobs in Ontario, and that is because of very poor energy policy going forward.

Yes, we're in favour of consolidation. Yes, we are in favour of moving forward with this. But no, we are not in favour of eliminating the scrutinizing that the public will have with this particular piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Before we move on, I'd like to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his kind words.

Comments, questions?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to join the member from Algoma-Manitoulin in thanking you for the excellent job you have been doing, Mr. Speaker. We all commend you for the excellent job you do in that chair.

There has been some discussion in this House, as we were debating Bill 75, about the cost of electricity in the province of Ontario. The reality is that our price, the price of electricity in Ontario, is very comparable with the price of electricity among our neighbouring jurisdictions, which is about five cents per kilowatt hour during off-peak times. When you compare this price with the price of electricity in western Europe, for example—just as an example, I give Germany, which is the industrial heartland of Europe. The price of electricity in Germany is 27 cents; in France, it's much higher than

ours—in Belgium, Holland and the UK and so on and so forth. So the price of electricity in our province of Ontario is reasonable and it is within the range with electricity prices in our neighbouring jurisdictions.

Apart from that, our government has given some benefits to the consumers of electricity in the province of Ontario. For example, we have the Ontario clean energy benefit which takes 10% off the bill of every consumer in the province of Ontario, and we have the Ontario energy and property tax credit. For seniors, it's about \$1,078 per year; for individuals and families it's \$946 per year. There is the northern Ontario energy credit, which is \$210 per family and \$137 for each individual. Those are the benefits for individuals and families.

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There are also benefits for industrial users as well, Mr. Speaker, particularly in northern Ontario. We have the northern industrial electricity program, which takes 25% off of the electricity bill for industries—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks to the member from Richmond Hill—also for his kind words.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to start by saying—and I thank the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills for his in-depth speech. But there's a paragraph on this paper I have. It says, "This legislation also addresses how the minister is to go about submitting an energy plan for the province's long-term energy needs, which must receive cabinet approval. However, it does not set out any time frames as to how often or when the minister is required to do this."

It says it "fails to correct a serious problem, which is the continued opportunity for undue political influence to outweigh factual evidence when it comes to decisions regarding Ontario's future energy plans. Many experts and observers of the industry believe the minister already has too much power."

Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario are frightened of our energy situation right now. They're frightened because of the cost. They don't know where this government is going, because as far as I know they've never had an energy plan that works. The green energy plan was implemented a number of years ago, and we've seen what that does: It drives up the costs of hydro, of energy; it separates communities. We have communities where neighbours aren't talking to their neighbours now. It's causing a lot of problems in rural Ontario. However, that doesn't seem to bother this government much. They would just as soon listen to the people of the cities; if they don't want an energy project in their backyard, rural Ontario doesn't matter.

I agree with my colleague over here with his thoughts. People in Ontario are frightened, and we need to get our energy policy under control for this province to be great again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, speaking on the Ontario electrical systems act, another two minutes, and I

think one thing the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills and everyone on this side of the House—people are worried about their energy costs. If they're watching us today, I think they sometimes don't really know what we're talking about; sometimes some of us don't even know what we're talking about. But at the end of the day, they're really worried about their energy costs. Does this bill relate to their energy costs? Yes, it does. If you put the outfit that buys the power and mould it together with the outfit that actually regulates the power, it should have a difference on their energy costs. It should reduce them—not by much; not by nearly enough. That part of the bill we can maybe swallow, maybe—that part of the bill. But the other part of the bill, the bill that no one on that side talks about, is when you mould the two together, you're also taking out the part where the OPA has to give an energy plan to the OEB, which the public—remember them, the people who pay the hydro bills?—can challenge, and you replace that with a ministerial plan. What we've gone through since the last little while—we all know what happens with ministerial plans, and when those of us in election campaigns get too involved in power, we all know what happens then.

Hon. John Gerretsen: What happens?

Mr. John Vanthof: People end up paying big bills for power that's never created, because politicians take energy plants and they move them around like Monopoly pieces on a board, on the provincial board, and it costs people who pay the bills—who can't pay the bills—it costs them way too much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills has two minutes.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to thank my colleagues from Algoma-Manitoulin, Richmond Hill, Perth-Wellington and Timiskaming-Cochrane for their comments.

Pretty clearly, we've heard many people speak, and we're hearing again and again that this bill is very flawed. It's going to merge two hydro organizations, with the idea that there would be efficiencies, economies and savings of \$25 million—and nobody believes that.

We're dealing with a government that has a terrible track record from the point of view of accountability and oversight, and a terrible record when it comes to managing money. We have organizations like Ornge, where corruption has happened and money was wasted; eHealth, Presto etc.

Now here we have a bill where, purposely and pointedly, oversight and accountability have been removed. So we think of the history of this government and how they've managed our money and the public purse in the past, and they've been a terrible failure, in the order of billions of dollars. If there's one thing they're good at, it's big numbers and big wastes of big money.

We see an organization that was supposed to be transitional. It started out with a \$14-million budget; it has blossomed to \$76 million. They've grown from 15

employees to 235, and the money's getting spent like water.

Clearly, this bill is not going to do any good for the Ontario taxpayer. It's a dangerous piece of legislation because of the complete lack of accountability and oversight, and a government that has a propensity for wasting our tax dollars. We have to vote this bill down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a chance to speak to Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, 2012.

The government has told us that this act will merge the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator. They also tell us that it will save Ontario taxpayers \$25 million per year, a savings that I would be happy to see, but I really think it's more like a drop on the sand against the surge of this government's energy price increases.

The PC caucus has identified a number of problems with the bill. Firstly, it reduces transparency and consolidates power in the hands of the Minister of Energy. Secondly, its cost savings are, as I have stated, only a droplet, and do not match what is necessary.

Bill 75 would strip away the board's ability to render meaningful input into many areas of the energy system, including long-term planning. Again, the board would be left with no real teeth or mechanism available to force any changes. This legislation would take away the board's oversight of fees charged by the IESO. It alters the role of the board and moves it away from consumer protection and, instead, towards an advocacy role for the policies of the government, putting emphasis on renewables and conservation.

So why are transparency and cost savings important? Because affordable energy is vital to Ontario's economic growth and prosperity. Reliable and affordable energy has played a crucial role in making Ontario the industrial heartland of Canada. It powered our once-unrivalled manufacturing sector that employed generations of Ontarians with good, dependable and lasting jobs.

Energy policy is a cornerstone of economic growth, but this has not been the approach that the current government has taken. Previous speakers have referred to various types of demonstration of the kind of industrial growth that has flourished in this province, and you can see obviously how the opposite is true.

In December, Auditor General Jim McCarter released a scathing indictment of the government's Green Energy Act, and I suggest that Green Energy Act was the poster for the government in terms of the way in which it wanted to manage the energy sector.

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The auditor tells us "that for each job created through renewable energy programs, about two to four jobs are often lost in other sectors of the economy because of higher electricity prices." The recent Drummond commission report also flagged the clear link between high electricity prices and lethargic growth in Ontario.

When you consider that energy and electricity are usually the key drivers to manufacturing and industrial activity, it only stands to reason that when a government makes deals that raise the cost of energy, this is going to have that obvious outcome. Our business hydro rates are amongst the highest in North America and obviously killing jobs and preventing growth.

If the government thinks that they are making a major contribution to affordable energy by merging the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator, they're wrong. The problem with our energy system is not these two agencies; it is the policies of this government.

Let me give you an example from my own riding: the natural-gas-fired peaker plant beside the Holland Marsh. In 2005, the Ontario Power Authority identified that there was an inadequate supply of electricity to meet the growing demand in northern York region. The government accepted this conclusion, as did I. The first plan to meet this from the OPA was to build an enhanced power line through York region. The government wouldn't back this, so the plan was scrapped. Then the OPA decided to build the peaker plant, studying and consulting on various sites in northern York region and southern Simcoe county. They eventually chose one beside the Holland Marsh, and the plant has now been built and is operational.

During this process, I asked for a full environmental assessment on the plant, which the Minister of the Environment refused to do. In 2010, the Environmental Commissioner revealed that local citizens had made multiple requests to bump up the peaker plant to a full environmental assessment. He said that the requesters made compelling arguments. The province denied their requests and the commissioner said that if a request was not granted in this case, it is difficult to imagine a situation when such a request would in fact be approved. In fact, the commissioner could not find any bump-up request that this government has granted.

Then the government decided to exempt the plant from the Planning Act to shove it through faster, and then they cancelled the plants in Oakville and Mississauga for blatantly political reasons.

All of this goes to show how poorly this government manages the energy file and why transparency is necessary.

Now they would have us believe that merging two energy agencies will make some kind of difference in how they manage our power system. I am confident that however they reorganize our electricity system, it will not meet the needs of Ontarians in a transparent and accountable manner. Exempting the peaker plant from the Planning Act is just the same as the government—when it looked at the Green Energy Act and took away local control over industrial wind and solar farms.

You lose accountability when decisions are removed from elected mayors and councils and moved to the Ministry of Energy at Queen's Park, and you drive costs through the roof, particularly with the green-energy boondoggle.

The Green Energy Act's feed-in tariff program pays out massive subsidies for wind and solar contracts to produce power we often cannot use when it is produced. This continues to drive up the cost of electricity. Costs rose 26% between 2008 and 2010, and bills are now projected to rise 46% by 2014. And because you can't store the wind and solar electricity, the taxpayers end up paying the United States and Quebec to take that even greater amount of surplus power off our hands. We've paid them \$1.8 billion over the last six years, \$420 million in the first 10 months of 2011 alone.

Then we have to add in the cost of cancelling the Oakville power plant and the cancellation, demolition and relocation of the Mississauga power plant. These cancellations were nothing more than political seat-savers and may cost the taxpayers or the ratepayers \$1 billion—maybe even \$1 billion apiece according to some estimates.

I said earlier that in my riding there was an important power need identified, and that it was the government that mismanaged the need. So it seems to me that when you look at all of this, what we have at the end of the day is a huge cost and lack of oversight, transparency and accountability. So on no basis can you find legitimate, good policy coming from the Ministry of Energy on the electricity file. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before I adjourn the House for the day, I'd like to thank the two fashion czars over there for their comment on my socks. Thanks very much.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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Thursday 4 October 2012

Jeudi 4 octobre 2012



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 4 October 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 4 octobre 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NON-PROFIT HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES

STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT DES LOIS

EN CE QUI CONCERNE

LES COOPÉRATIVES DE LOGEMENT SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 3, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés coopératives et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne les coopératives de logement sans but lucratif et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: On April 16, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing moved first reading of Bill 65, the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act, 2012. I'm pleased to be here today to speak on behalf of the New Democrats and our leader, Andrea Horwath, and I want to acknowledge that Harvey Cooper and Dale Reagan, our colleagues from the co-op federation, are in the gallery for the third hour of debate.

I'm going to spend some time talking about the bill, but I'm also going to spend some time talking about people in our community, people who live in co-ops, problem areas in affordable housing and the other, kind of, pitfalls around the whole housing strategy.

The purpose of the bill is pretty narrow: Its purpose is actually to deal with tenant disputes—evictions—in a way that is more cost-effective and quicker, that actually saves co-ops money, that saves tenants money and that moves the process through the system. Every other sector of housing in this province, with the exception of the co-op housing sector, actually uses the tribunal process through the Landlord and Tenant Board. So the bill will actually move them into this process as well.

This bill is a long time coming. It's been since 2004 that the co-ops have been lobbying to have this bill introduced. There may be some amendments that are needed, but certainly we will have consultation with the stakeholders around those areas.

The benefits of the bill are that the tribunal system would be fairer and less costly for the co-ops. The fee is very modest compared to the lawyers' fees and court costs they currently incur, and it would reduce losses when members are not actually paying their rent as they're going through the rent arrears process. Co-op members, of course, wouldn't have to hire a lawyer. Many times they don't qualify for legal aid, and so they would actually be able to have a faster, less costly process as well. And there are also benefits for the wider public. The public cost of administering co-op evictions will be reduced, and the hearings that were really unnecessary in the courts will reduce the backlogs in the court system, so then we'll actually be able to get real issues back into the courts and the wait-lists there will decrease.

As I said, the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada's Ontario region submitted a substantial brief to the province back in 2004. That's why we're finally here today, many years—eight years—later.

In my area in Niagara, I had an opportunity to speak to Betty Ann Baker. Betty Ann is actually the CEO of Niagara Peninsula Homes. It is a non-profit agency that manages co-ops and other not-for-profit agencies—it consults for rental agencies. In my discussions with Betty Ann, she told me that she had a case out of one of the co-ops in my area where the court costs at the end of the day were actually \$49,000, an outrageous amount of money. I'm told there has even been one case in the system that cost \$100,000. So the average cost is between \$4,000 and \$6,000, but \$49,000 is really a useless expense just to evict someone from a housing unit. I think the public interest will really be served by using the tribunal system.

The United Nations actually declared 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives, and nothing could be more fitting for the 125,000 Ontarians who make co-operative housing their homes than for Queen's Park—all parties—to resolve this long-standing issue; there are about 500,000 people across Canada who actually live in co-ops. I'm sure there will be all-party support for this bill to provide members and co-ops with the same access to this dispute resolution process at the tribunal that others have enjoyed for at least 15 years.

I want to talk a bit now about the overburdened court system in Welland, which probably is mimicked across

the province. I often hear in my constituency office about how the court system is struggling. If anyone knows about the struggles, it's the judges and the lawyers and our constituents who actually try to get access to the courts. I often hear from families, around the Family Responsibility Office, that can't even get to work on a file because it hasn't left the courts here in the province because of the backlogs, or how civil cases are delayed and payments are on hold because of burden costs.

I hear from lawyers, as well, who are handling child protection matters. The court is so backlogged that they can't resolve these important family matters because the courts are overburdened with issues that don't need to be there any longer. The lawyers, of course, are as frustrated as their clients. There are many reasons for this breakdown. In fact, the Auditor General, in his report in 2010, made a number of recommendations. One of them is court resources. He said, "To be comparable with other provinces, Ontario would have to hire significantly more judges and justices of the peace, as well as providing additional court facilities and support staff."

While we're removing co-ops from the backlog and moving them to the Landlord and Tenant Board, neither system is going to function if we don't resource them properly. So although we're going to remove this from the courts, we also need to resource the Landlord and Tenant Board to ensure that those processes have enough staff and enough funding to actually move them along quickly.

Now there are some limitations to the bill. Currently, under the bill, tenants actually have the right to an appeal system from eviction. In fact, this bill will remove that appeal process. We believe that members of co-operatives need an impartial process to ensure that the co-operatives meet their responsibility to provide safe and quality housing. The bill will continue to allow some convictions to go to court, but we don't believe there is a reason to give the courts open-ended eviction power, in view of the problems we're currently experiencing with that process.

0910

The Landlord and Tenant Board needs the power to determine the subsidy question; these are questions around rent issues. There are limitations in the bill about resolving those as well. One of the limitations will leave co-op members and tenants of non-profit landlords without an effective way to challenge incorrect rents, and we don't believe that is fair.

We also have seniors living in co-ops. In fact, some of the co-ops have a large population of seniors. I think seniors would have easier access to safe and secure housing if we turned our minds to today's issues of pensions. In this House, we often hear about the kind of rich defined benefit plans that public sector workers have. We don't want seniors actually living in poverty, so we believe that we should be protecting these defined benefit plans so that seniors also can live a quality life in our co-ops and in other housing markets when they retire.

Ensure access to better and safe, stable, accessible housing: We need to be doing more for tenants. You

know, the government talks about having a housing strategy, but there are no funding targets attached to that strategy. Recently, the government actually failed to stand up against the sale of public housing stock here in the city of Toronto. At one point, the Minister of Housing was opposed to, or not moving forward on, selling that stock—I think the number was 65 units. But the Premier overruled the minister to allow the sale of 65 units of affordable housing stock here in the city of Toronto. This is at a time when we have 170,000 households on a waitlist across the province.

We also need to examine the merits of a housing benefit. In the platform in the last election campaign, in 2011, the Liberals actually talked about the merits of perhaps investigating a housing benefit, but we haven't seen any of that to date, a year later. New Democrats also talked about having a housing benefit for individuals and families who pay more than 30% of their income on rent. This will be really important to people who live in this province, because one in five persons in this province actually pays more than 50% of their income in rent, and a large majority of them pay more than 30%. I think it's very important that we go back and have a look at the housing benefit as part of a way to provide more affordable housing in this province.

There are other ways to improve our housing stock as well, and one of those ways is with vacancy decontrol. I know the member from Parkdale—High Park introduced a bill in the last sitting of the Legislature, but it didn't pass. We will, at some point, be introducing another bill on that issue. I want to talk about how that actually affects people who live in our communities. Just for information and for the record, all units after 1991 are exempt, so there are 50,000 or 60,000 units across the province that are exempt. But then there are also these loopholes in the legislation. So when a unit becomes vacant, the landlord can actually jack up the rent.

I want to tell you a little story that just came to my attention in my riding. There is this couple—and they've allowed me to use their names because this is a very important issue to them—Ross and Joanne Battle. Joanne worked at the hospital; she was a housekeeper. She has a small pension, not one of those large, rich, public sector pensions that everyone talks about—

M^{me} France Gélinas: Private sector pensions.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Sometimes public—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Private sector, yes. Eleanor Clitheroe, yes—that's a private sector pension.

Anyway, her husband Ross is disabled. He worked as a security guard for many years. He's in a wheelchair. They live in an apartment building in Welland, in my riding; they live on the third floor. Their elevator breaks down. So he has to have some of the other tenants actually bring him down to the ground floor. They go and they live in a hotel for two or three days while the elevator's being fixed because he needs to go for dialysis three times a week and he is afraid that he's not going to be able to get out of his building.

After all this happens and he goes back to the building, they make application to move to a ground-floor

apartment in their building. I'm now calling this the "double loophole" in the vacancy control legislation, or decontrol, whichever you want to call it. What's happening now is Ross and Joanne have applied to move to a ground-floor apartment so that they can always have access to get to the hospital, which he needs to go to on a regular basis. They're on the wait-list; they're now being told that they're going to have to pay \$60 more per month—\$720 a year—to move to a ground-floor apartment in a building where they have lived for more than 10 years. So the landlord's going to get the rent increase on their unit and he's going to increase the rent on the unit they're moving to. Now we have two units that actually don't have rent control on them.

That's a story about people in my riding, and I'm sure that it is happening in your ridings as well.

We also need to introduce some legislation that actually deals with work orders, and there are many people—I met with ACTO over the last year here in Toronto at one of their meetings. I've been around to a number of apartments in my riding and other ridings across the province—there are many outstanding work orders. In fact, in Toronto, one tenant reported an elevator that was out of order for a year in a large multi-floor building. There needs to be legislation that will prevent landlords from increasing rent until those work orders are actually complied with.

There are, as I said, 170,000 households waiting for affordable housing in this province, and that is more than a 26% increase in a five-year period. The government, in 2003, committed to building 20,000 units of affordable housing, but in nine years, they've actually built only 16,000 units—far less than they promised to do and over a very much longer period of time. Many households in this province are waiting, on average, two to four years, but in the city of Toronto, some people wait as many as 12 to 14 years. It is really a shame that that happens.

Although co-op housing enjoys a strong, successful history, we need to have more co-op housing in this province. The co-op housing sector is really at a disadvantage when it comes to new development because they don't necessarily have the resources, financial or otherwise, like municipalities and private developers, and so they often are kind of shut out of the development process because of that. And I think that we need to find ways to actually allow them to come in and develop more co-op units across this province.

0920

The Canadian Labour Congress often spends a lot of time talking about poverty and the lack of housing here in the province of Ontario. Women, unfortunately, form the vast majority of people who are living in poverty in this province. About one in three children are living in poverty, and more than half of single parents—mothers—are living in poverty as well. First Nations and the unemployment rate certainly all affect the levels of poverty here in the province of Ontario. The poverty rate is 29% for racialized women and 23% for immigrant women. Lone senior women are also affected at about a 46% rate.

Poverty in Canada costs about \$72 million to \$84 million to the health care system alone.

Women living on low incomes face serious barriers to finding safe and affordable housing. In many communities, the wait-lists for subsidized housing are long and the housing is poorly maintained. In places like Ottawa and Toronto, of course, the waiting lists, as I said, are much longer. Canada needs to have a national housing strategy and to address the growing poverty inequality.

You know, there's a myth about poverty among Canadian seniors, that poverty in seniors has almost been eradicated. But based on a Stats Canada assertion that only 6.1% of seniors are actually living with low income, even if the statistic were accurate, it would still represent over 268,000 seniors. But we believe that, in reality, 36% of seniors, so 1.6 million who are receiving the guaranteed income supplement, are also living in poverty. Many of our seniors are living with an income of \$1,400 or \$1,500 a month on guaranteed income. So there really is a need to create more affordable housing in the senior sector as well as across all sectors of our society. Many of our seniors can only afford the basic essentials of life, which is, you know, rent for their apartment—for which they're probably paying 50% of their income—some food and their utilities. Many of them don't even have enough money left at the end of the day for any social activities. So all levels of government have recognized the need to address the specific challenges faced by seniors.

There's no comprehensive anti-poverty strategy; there are inadequate levels of support; there are clawbacks; there's insufficient awareness of the supports that are available; and there's a lack of affordable housing. The problem of seniors living in poverty will increase as Canada's population ages. Today there are 11 million Canadians who are over 50 years old, 34% of the population. CARP advocates for us to look at poverty, to consider the income-versus-expenditure equation and to create a national anti-poverty strategy for all ages. They recommend that health care services must be available and accessible to all seniors as well.

At one point, the government committed to meeting modest and limited poverty reduction targets. They failed to meet those targets, and that's no surprise. I think at the federal level, if I remember correctly, the Liberal government promised to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000. It's now 2012, and it's actually increased—it's increased.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A Liberal government?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, the Liberal government. That's right.

So we're not going to meet any targets without doing some real work. In 2009, the province of Ontario only spent \$64 per capita on affordable housing, and that is only half of what any other province, on average, spends on affordable housing across this country.

The New Democrats, in our platforms—our last platform and the platforms before that—have presented solid, costed plans for increasing affordable housing units

over a four-year period to make life more affordable for the lowest-income Ontarians, and other countries have done it. Sweden, for example, did the “million-dollar plan,” I think it was called.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Million-home plan.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Million-home plan. They actually built 100,000 units a year for 10 years, and they have no homelessness problems any longer. They have enough affordable housing for everyone who lives there. So if Sweden can do it—it’s a very small country—certainly Canada can do it. But the plan needs more financial investment and it needs targets, and it won’t happen unless we do that.

One of the other ways to increase affordable housing is through inclusionary zoning. Our member from Parkdale–High Park yesterday introduced that again; she tabled a bill yesterday. She had tabled that bill as well in the last Legislature.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Three times.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Three times. So she’s hoping that this time she’ll be successful. This is a really easy, cost-effective way for municipalities to actually increase affordable housing. It would require a little planning amendment, and then municipalities, on a voluntary basis—they wouldn’t have to. If you don’t want to, you don’t have to. But on a voluntary basis, they could require developers to put a certain percentage of affordable housing into their development. It might mean that the developer gets another floor—they get 24 floors instead of 23—and we get 10 affordable housing units, but it really is a cost-effective way to try to achieve some of those goals.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Zero tax dollars.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, zero tax dollars. So the taxpayers of this province don’t spend a penny. We could build thousands of new affordable units. When I was getting ready to come here—the United States has done a lot of this, and they’ve been able to create all kinds of affordable housing units in many states on a voluntary basis to try to decrease that gap for people.

Ontario has the highest housing costs of any province. Many Canadians are facing housing affordability challenges and are trapped in the cycle of poverty. The reality is that poverty creates social exclusion and inequality by denying access to affordable, adequate and safe housing. Health is also impacted by poverty, and our health costs are soaring because of the need for affordable housing. Because people are paying more of their income on housing, they don’t have the money to actually buy good, nutritious foods. They don’t have the money to actually go out and buy prescriptions that perhaps they need for their blood pressure problems or their diabetic problems because the cost of rent is so high. That’s the first thing that they need to do with the limited income that they have.

There’s a real disconnect between housing and income. However, when it comes to addressing housing needs, we tend to equate the lack of affordable housing with supply of units and the affordability of those units,

which results in a disconnect between housing and income. An inadequate income is one of the main causes of housing insecurity in that people are not earning enough; they’re not making a liveable wage to pay for housing. We often hear in this House that we have too many public sector jobs, that we need to move those public sector jobs into the private market. But, in fact, when they move into the private market, all it does is it drives those wages down. So now we have more people living with lower wages, trying to make ends meet.

The rising cost of rent coupled with income insecurity increases the challenges of housing affordability for low-income Canadians living in poverty and struggling to meet their basic needs. I mean, just look at what’s happening at a federal level: increasing the age when people can now collect old age security from 65 to 67. So we’ve got those 46% of seniors already living in poverty, and now we’re going to add a new layer of people. They haven’t even determined how they’re going to meet that gap between 65 and 67, but I think it’s only going to increase the income insecurity for a lot of Canadians.

0930

I want to talk about the wealth gap. As the gap between the rich and poor widens, we need a conscious effort to address poverty to ensure that all Canadians, regardless of income, can access affordable housing. Housing is a human right recognized by the United Nations, and it’s a fundamental right. The Ontario Human Rights Commission knows that low social and economic status is a common factor in housing discrimination, but in spite of the law, people still experience discrimination on that basis. It happens here in Ontario, it happens across this country, and it shouldn’t be happening. There is nothing more important than a safe, affordable house for people to live in.

Supportive housing is also important to the housing sector, and I want to talk a little bit about an affordable housing building in my riding. It’s called Canal View Homes, and I talked about this briefly in a member’s statement early on. I talked about a woman named MaryJane Huneault. This building has, I think, 42 or 46 units that are targeted at people with mental health disabilities. The building was built with federal and provincial dollars on the premise that it would always have supports in that particular program, and after 20 years, last year, the supportive housing dollars were discontinued: \$150,000.

There were just two people, two staff members there, who supported 46 residents. MaryJane Huneault was somebody who for years had cycled in and out of the mental health unit at our local hospital. Once she found stable housing at Canal View, she never had another admission to the hospital in 20 years. But the government, for some reason, decided that they would cut that funding, and now those 46 residents are actually struggling at Canal View because they don’t have the supports they need to keep them in sustainable housing. So health care costs are then going to rise.

This government, the Liberal government, has also allowed school boards to sell off surplus properties

without even looking at them as a potential for affordable housing. School boards have sold them off because they are trying to balance their budgets, but that would be a great way to try and work with the co-ops, for example: provide the property and have the co-ops do the development.

We have one such unit through Community Living in Port Colborne, where 15 supportive housing units were built in a surplus school a number of years ago, but there's been no such development since. In my riding, for many years, a number of schools sat vacant and empty. One high school recently burned down, the subject of vandalism. It was on a beautiful piece of property right along the Welland River. It could have been developed into wonderful co-op units and space, but before any development could actually occur, it lost its life to fire.

We also need some co-operation, and we need a spirit of co-operation from each level of government. For a housing strategy to be sustainable, adaptable and innovative, we need to work with the federal government and we need to work with other governments and municipalities to try and reduce poverty and to try and increase affordable housing strategies. But there is no spirit of co-operation, Speaker, because one year this government is uploading and the next year it's downloading.

The changes to the community start-up and maintenance benefit in the recent spring budget—that is going to affect poverty in this region. It's going to increase homelessness in this region. Depending on who you talk to, the reduction in the total amount of dollars for those benefits is somewhere between \$60 million and \$120 million to the communities across this province. The money used to support a maximum \$799-a-month benefit to a single person for the last month's rent, to move them from a shelter to a sustainable apartment, or perhaps for an emergency repair or an odd utility bill. That's been discontinued; 50% of that funding has been cut. The program, they say, was to provide more flexibility to municipalities, with 50% dollars and by increasing who the funding could actually apply to. So the dollar pie is getting smaller, but the people pie is actually getting bigger, and it is going to increase homelessness in this province.

If you look at what it costs—so, many of these people who become homeless either end up in the hospital, they end up in a shelter or they end up in corrections. Speaker, it costs \$1,000 a day to keep someone in the hospital; it costs \$300 a day to keep someone in a jail cell; and it costs \$1,500 a month to keep someone in a shelter. So I think it was really short-sighted to reduce a benefit for people that would have cost \$800 once every two years, potentially, and have them end up in a shelter at \$1,500 a month.

The other piece is that the social assistance review is about to come out; it has been in the works for a couple of years. And here we are, reducing benefits to the same people that the social assistance review is about—consultation at its best.

Now I want to turn to the benefits of co-op housing, and there are lots of benefits. It offers benefits that no

other form of rental housing has. It gives a democratic voice to residents, allowing them to shape their own environment.

There are 2,100 non-profit co-ops, and 250,000 people across Canada living in them. There are 550 co-ops here in the province of Ontario. They are subject to the legal requirements of government funding programs.

The business and community decisions in housing co-ops are often made by the residents themselves. The members collectively take responsibility for their housing and to protect their purposes. In all other forms of rental housing, tenants have rights, but subject to them, they hold no power in the decision-making of their living, and the distinction is significant. Co-op members working together, operating their housing, develop broader forms of interaction and initiative, and they behave like communities.

0940

I can talk about one of the co-ops in my own riding, and I actually live right next door to that co-op. It is called the St. Charles co-op, and it's a mixed community. There are co-operative apartments on the beautiful Welland recreational canal; there are co-op townhouses; and then, in that mix, there are private maisonettes. Generally it's couples or older couples or singles who actually live in these maisonettes, and those are private kind of bungalow—attached townhouses. Then there's actually a private retirement home. You'll often actually see people from the maisonettes moving into the retirement home as they age. But all of these people interact together. There are many functions there throughout the year—July 1 celebrations. They invite each other to their events. I've attended many a celebration at St. Charles.

The people who live in co-ops are also very politically inclined. I've attended many meetings around election times at a federal level and at a provincial level. They actually hold debates at their co-ops. They want to know what their politicians at a municipal level, provincial or federal level are going to do for them. I've had many a co-op member work an election campaign for me. They really are communities. They are friends, they are families, and they're very politically engaged. It's a very positive result for people who are able to actually move into the co-op sector from any other form of rental properties.

In some of our co-ops—I would say probably in most of our co-ops—they have rent geared to income, and some of their units are also market rents. In that model, the market rents actually assist the co-op in providing income to do the needed maintenance on the buildings.

I was the vice-chair for about five years of Niagara Regional Housing, which was kind of arm's length from the Niagara regional council. I worked with Betty Ann Baker, who is the CEO of Niagara Peninsula Homes; I talked about her earlier today. It's interesting: It's actually in my area, in Welland, that the first co-op was actually ever built for the Niagara-Hamilton region. We're talking about an area of around a million people, and the first one was actually established—it was Briar Rose Co-

op—in Welland. It was in response to a need for safe and affordable housing.

The Welland riding has moved forward over the years, embracing the value of co-operative housing. It has produced more than 500 units in my riding. One of them includes the Mel Swart Co-op. Many of you will remember Mel Swart; he was a popular and respected politician from the Welland riding for the New Democrats from 1975 to 1988. Usually, things are named after important people after they die, but in fact the people of Welland thought Mel Swart was so great and so important that they actually named it for him while he was still alive. I attended many an AGM with Mel over the years at his co-op.

Betty Ann also talked to me about the SHRRP program, and she talked about the joint federal-provincial program. She viewed that program as kind of a win-win situation for the investment of maintenance for social housing and employment initiatives. Niagara Peninsula Homes was able to maintain and make the necessary repairs to their units by hiring younger workers, many of whom moved into apprenticeship programs. So you can see that, in fact, in the co-op movement, we do more than just build units; we help build lives.

Through Niagara Peninsula Homes, they developed a number of programs that I've been involved with over the years. One of those programs was Niagara Presents; I think it's now called Niagara enterprises. It was actually a way of working with the food producers in the Niagara region and with women who were unemployed to create products that they now sell in the retail market. They have also, in the last couple of years, created a program to assist women who are unemployed or women who have fallen on hard times through unemployment or through domestic abuse or who have mental health issues.

They've created a training program through Niagara Peninsula Homes. I was actually able to attend a graduation a couple of months ago. Many of these women who went through this—I think it's a 12-week program—when they graduated, already had found jobs. It also addressed women who perhaps had been laid off and were underemployed, and it gave them the training and the tools and the self-confidence and self-esteem to actually get back out into the workforce. So co-ops, as I say, are more than just a roof over your head.

There was an evaluation done in 2003, and it was evaluating how residents feel about where they're living. There was certainly greater resident involvement in the operation of co-operative housing than in other types of housing. More than 90% of co-op residents have participated in the operation of their housing, and 65% to 70% felt that they had the ability to influence decisions, and that they had a greater sense of security and tenure than in the other housing markets.

For provincial co-ops, the evaluation survey showed 92% resident involvement compared to only 4.1% in a mixed-income non-profit rental housing and 17% in a non-profit rental housing. So you can see that people are really involved in their communities in the co-op sector.

The main impacts on quality of life for co-operative residents versus residents in other tenures are increased social support, sense of community, improved relations with friends and neighbours, and feelings of independence and security. The residents who were actually surveyed in the co-operative housing sector said they had an improved quality of life for the occupants compared with other forms of housing, and participation in their housing actually leads to improved social support.

The ratio of involvement of co-ops to condominiums—now, many of us are living in condominiums here in Toronto while we're sitting in the House doing our work. Only half of condominium residents said that they had gained more friends or strengthened personal supports, compared to 75% of co-op residents. So co-op residents were reportedly more satisfied with the sense of community than any residents living in other forms of housing.

We need to be looking at affordable housing as a contributor to better health. Precarious housing in Ontario—whether defined by level of inadequate or affordable housing, homelessness or under-housing—can be solved in this decade, but we have to have the will to be able to do that. The lack of accessible affordable housing is a pressing problem—precarious. It contributes to poor health for many, and it leads to pervasive but avoidable health inequalities. Health equity suggests that the role of society is to reduce the health disparities gap between those who are advantaged and those who are marginalized.

I just want to take a couple of minutes to go back and summarize. Bill 65, the co-operatives statute amendment, will improve the speed and efficiency of resolution of tenant disputes by taking them out of courts. Additional action is needed to support the viability of co-op housing in Toronto and to deal with the lack of affordable housing across Ontario.

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There is a real need for the bill. It has been eight years since it was first being lobbied for the change. It's been promised since 2007, and it's certainly time to move on it. It's the only system that is still in the court system, so it needs to move to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Co-op evictions are costly and they take a long time, and eviction costs can be very expensive not only to the tenants but to the co-op, as well as to the larger community.

There are limitations to the bill; I did speak briefly about them. Currently, there's an appeal process in the co-op system, and the bill proposes to amend that appeal system. There will be still some issues out of the co-op housing sector that will require the use of the court system, but we don't believe that there's any need to give the court open-ended eviction power. There is elimination of appeals by the co-op member. We believe that that actually is unfair and that it probably should be reinstated.

The Landlord and Tenant Board needs the power to determine the subsidy questions, the questions around the rental piece.

There was a report from Chief Justice LeSage recommending that the Toronto Housing Authority should take steps to recommend an amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act to allow the Landlord and Tenant Board to assess the appropriateness of rent-geared-to-income decisions, but the prohibition in section 203 is in direct conflict with the Landlord and Tenant Board's obligation to fairly adjudicate disputes about tenants and now co-op members—obligations to pay the rent lawfully owing.

Landlord and Tenant Board members routinely make decisions about the correctness of rent calculations for tenants in the private sector, subject to rent regulation provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act, including setting rents on above-guideline-increase applications.

We believe that leaving co-op members and tenants of non-profit landlords without an effective way to challenge incorrect rents is not fair. That is one of the limitations of the bill.

I think that I pretty much—so I think I'll close now, Speaker.

We need to move forward with this one small step to improve the efficiency and reduce the costs for the co-op housing sector around eviction issues, but there are many other initiatives that could improve the quality of lives of co-op members and Ontarians, like continuing to grow the co-op sector with opportunities for community-based developments.

Co-ops are more than just a roof over people's heads. Co-ops have harnessed the goodwill of members to create self-determining communities in which they can rightly take pride.

I want to thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak about this important issue, and I look forward to further debate.

Certainly, the co-op sector is hoping that this bill is going to be brought forward by the government in a very timely manner. They hope that we won't be debating it for days and days and days, because they actually would like to move on, get the bill passed and move on with their new disputes system. Hopefully, we'll be able to accommodate them over the remainder of this session and get this bill passed.

Thank you very much for being here, and thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I just want to commend the member from Welland this morning for very thoughtful, very articulate comments on Bill 65, and certainly a continuation of the goodwill that I believe was clearly demonstrated yesterday in this House by the leadoff remarks from the member from Leeds–Grenville, and today, of course, followed by what I thought were very positive remarks from the member from Welland.

I think it's appropriate that she noted the former member from Welland, Mr. Swart. When you look at the history of the Ontario Legislature, nobody more than Mel, of course, brought forward issues that were very important to the consumer in the province of Ontario. If

you look back at some of the newspapers out of Welland and St. Catharines, there are often great pictures of Mr. Swart being in this House with a particular product that he was highlighting that needed to be changed or consumer protection that needed to be changed because there was something amok going on in that particular sector.

I think it's fair to say he was the ultimate defender of the consumer in the province of Ontario, an individual who made an enormous contribution to the public life here in the province of Ontario, followed by a more colourful member, Mr. Kormos, and now the current member for Welland, who falls in those very distinguished footsteps.

She noted the key reasons in Bill 65 to provide some reform. Currently, most of these disputes are in the courts and get tied up for many, many months in the courts, which is a clear detriment to people who are living in co-ops in the province of Ontario. We all have co-ops in our ridings. Whether you're in Welland, in Thorold, in Peterborough or Bowmanville or Oshawa, there are great examples of co-op organizations and boards of directors that work so hard each and every day on behalf of the residents in that co-op movement.

The camaraderie on Bill 65 is a pleasure, so we're going to move this forward, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to commend the member from Welland for her one hour—almost one hour—and her impassioned plea on behalf of vulnerable people. I would say it was a broad rambling on the issue of social awareness.

I have listened over the last three days to the minister, Kathleen Wynne, as well as our critic, the member from Leeds–Grenville, yesterday. There really is unanimous agreement on this bill, and I'm surprised the government is kind of wasting time here in the Legislature; they should be getting it into a committee.

I respect the members from the stakeholder groups here this morning, as well. They were here listening to these long speeches. I suspect our position is to agree 100% that this is an efficient way of dealing with disputes, by moving them out of the courts and saving both sides, the landlord as well as the tenant, considerable money. My notes would say that the minister's technical briefing said it was in the order of between \$3,000 and \$5,000 each to resolve disputes today, even if you can get to court. So I think sending it to the Landlord and Tenant Board would be a much more efficient way of dealing with disputes, and that's important.

I think the important thing she said—it's important that the government members, the few of them who are here—this bill isn't really about affordable housing at all. It's got virtually nothing to do with that, really, which is a very important thing. But you did mention, I think, that it was a very good report.

In 2003, I believe, they promised something in the order of 20,000 new low-cost housing or affordable housing, and they haven't delivered on that promise. Of course,

they didn't tell you all the other things they were going to do. They did promise—they've not closed the coal plants after 10 years, either. They promise everything and do nothing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, first I want to thank the member from Welland for putting forward the case very strongly, very completely, setting the context for the issue before us, and I want to thank the co-op housing federation for spending the time—years, I believe—moving this issue forward.

I had the privilege, the opportunity, before I got into political life to manage housing co-ops. You have to know, Speaker, that housing co-operatives provide good-quality housing for a range of people, but predominantly middle-income and low-income working people. They were set up in the first place to give people good-quality housing at a price they could afford.

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These are not deep-pocketed organizations. When the member from Welland cited the cost of eviction in the current climate of \$49,000—up to \$100,000 in exceptional cases—it was very clear to me that it was time to move on. Those sorts of expenses, when an alternative is available that is affordable, that ensures that there's justice, a fair hearing between the organization, the co-operative and the resident, a fair hearing at a lower cost on an expedited basis—it's very clear that we have to take this forward.

The opposition has said that this bill does the job; it needs to go to committee. I agree. Let's move this forward. I don't see it as controversial. The government introduced the bill. The opposition and the third party both think that it has the merit it needs to actually go through committee and be passed. Let's go there so that those working families can have affordable and just processes for dealing with these kind of conflicts.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure for me to join in on this debate, and I want to congratulate the member from Welland for her speech today and for her support for this bill. I just want to say, if I may speak as House leader, what a pleasure it is to hear support from all sides of this House.

I'd be remiss not to congratulate the Co-operative Housing Federation and the representatives who are here today, including Harvey Cooper. I think that poor Mr. Cooper has trekked to every constituency office in the province of Ontario to make his case.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Harvey never sleeps.

Hon. John Milloy: He never sleeps, says my friend Mr. Leal. I had a very, very good meeting with him some time ago, and in fact regularly meet with representatives of the co-ops that exist in my riding. I think what's important when people look at this legislation is to realize that we're not talking about a small group. The stats are very clear: There are approximately 550 co-op providers,

according to the stats I have, representing 44,000 households and 125,000 people. I suspect that anyone who sat down and looked at this bill for the first time—and indeed when I started to understand the co-op sector through the meetings I had—they would be very shocked, Mr. Speaker, to realize that disputes right now, disputes of the nature that have been talked about in the debate, actually have to go to court. Intuitively, many people would think that they would be dealt with in a similar fashion to what's happening in the landlord and tenant act.

If passed, as has been pointed out, Bill 65 would allow co-operative boards to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to resolve tenure disputes that are currently provided for under the Residential Tenancies Act. As I say, I think most people would be surprised that it already doesn't exist. It's time we moved forward with this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Welland, you have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the members from Peterborough, from Durham and from Toronto—Danforth, the Minister of Community and Social Services, and, of course, the Co-operative Housing Federation for bringing this very important issue back to us year after year after year.

The member from Durham said something right: We don't have any committees, so how do we actually get this bill passed if we don't have any committees? Hopefully—I know we have a meeting today—we'll be getting those committees back up and running, and we can move a lot of these bills off to committee so that we can get them passed.

However, it sounds like there's all-party support for this bill, so we could do unanimous consent for third reading and just get it over with, right? This is a really important issue. It's not just about the bill. This is an issue that's about people; 125,000 people across this province live in co-op housing. The money that we'll save in court costs, in legal fees and in the real time of the people who actually manage and work the co-ops can be better used for upgrades and repairs and programs in the co-op communities. It's hundreds of thousands of dollars.

So I look forward to getting this bill passed and moving on to more—not more important issues than this, but to the bigger issues of affordable housing: How are we going to fund that? How are we going to make more affordable units here in the province of Ontario? I'll be dealing with some of that in my private member's bill in a couple of weeks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank Harvey and our friends from the co-op movement. This is a very important and—I think to say it's a long-overdue piece of legislation is probably an understatement. It has been a lot of work. Probably many lawyers in the public and private sector have made a good living out of this

legislative initiative, and I'm very proud to be part of a government that has landed this and brought this home. It is no small feat, and it is extremely important to the fairness for all people living in co-ops.

I am proudly the MPP who represents probably more co-ops than any other MPP in the country, I'm going to take a guess. I live in a neighbourhood in this no-man's-land between Corktown and St. Lawrence. We can't quite figure out what to call the neighbourhood. We have about 30,000 more people coming in, a lot of them in this provincial government's affordable housing initiatives and a new mixed-income neighbourhood. We're sort of planning a Regent Park there, you know, the great work we have done with our municipal and federal partners in re-establishing mixed-income neighbourhoods and affordable housing. It's really transformative, and to people like Diane MacLean and the folks who have initiated those, these were very grassroots. Now, when we're planning new downtown neighbourhoods, we're actually taking the spirit of mixing income.

It is a concern of mine and a hope that one day we will get back to more co-ops. When I was mayor of Winnipeg, we saw—under the best intentions of governments of other stripes, but governments of a similar set of values—efforts to continue co-ops. It is hard now, I think, because of land prices and some of the challenges facing co-ops. I still think they are the most underutilized solution to a whole wide range of housing units, and I'm hoping, as we go forward, that those of us from all parties—I know the member from Welland spoke earlier. I think she and I share a set of values and ideas around this, about getting back to supporting the co-op movement in a greater way.

But the way you support people is not necessarily by doing the things that we want in here; it's by doing the things that people in co-ops want. The Residential Tenancies Act amendments will actually finally put in place a fair dispute resolution system for members and folks who are in arrears, who are persistent in the late payment of rent, whether it's been illegal or problematic behaviours, and where there is interfering with reasonable enjoyment or there's wilful damage.

I live in a condo in the middle of a whole lot of co-ops. Almost everything that we have is shared. Having a sense of co-operative values means that we live in the middle of our neighbourhoods, in the middle of our common areas. We don't have large SUVs in our front lawns. We don't live in areas where we have pools or a suburban lifestyle where everything we want is on our property. My parents, when we were growing up, moved to the suburbs. There was no main street; there was a shopping mall. Most of us living in central Toronto in co-ops and condos don't have balconies; we don't have backyards. We live in the middle of our libraries, our public services, our schools. We live in shared public spaces which are precious and few, and the civility of those relationships really defines the livability of our experience, because you have to be a bit of a social animal to want to live the co-op life. Seventy per cent of

my constituents don't own an automobile; we have to live in a walkable neighbourhood. The very idea of sharing and familiarity and collaboration is inherent to my constituents.

Bob Rae, a former Premier, now a member of Parliament, and David Crombie are two authors of a great deal of the co-ops in St. Lawrence—the brilliant planning leadership of the former Mayor Crombie in setting height restrictions. Not until Barbara Hall did we have anyone who actually understood how you revitalize and create scale, and understood the importance—that co-ops would naturally gravitate to that kind of standard of space and that kind of spatial organization. Bob Rae, as a Premier here, leader of what is now the third party, I think led a very powerful vision for co-ops, which we haven't really seen very often in Canada; it's very typical in Europe. That legacy is there. This is continuing, I think, in a legacy not just shared by our party but, quite frankly, to be fair, being shared by the third party—that we have shared this idea.

1010

We can't just build something, get the rules in and then ignore them. One of the things that I am proud of here is the great work that people in the co-op system do, that they continue to have expectations of government, they continue to bring those values to government, and they ask us to put in a set of rules so it's not us making decisions. I really think that most people out there today feel that government, corporations, the cable company, the insurance companies are telling them how to live their lives. What people actually want is more choices. They want a decent process. So when we work with people who voluntarily and creatively want government to put in some sort of organizational plan, some set of rules so that they can resolve disputes themselves, that's a pretty positive thing and a very mature kind of thing, and I think this is a really critical piece of it.

The other thing that often comes up is, are people fairly *[inaudible]*? Mr. Speaker, I represent the most complicated of communities. When I knock on doors, I literally knock on a door in a co-op where I am looking at an Afghan family where there is one man, his wife, usually another older woman who is described as a cousin—often is a second wife, quite frankly—and five or six or seven children. Women in that area often don't ever leave their house. They live a very old-world kind of experience. Three doors down, I will meet a young transgender woman who is just going through a sex change operation. These people get on the elevator every morning. They have the most unusual lives and the most complex lives. It is one of the great joys of being a downtown member of Parliament.

But what is different about simply living in a co-op or living in a condo is that in a co-op, these people have relationships. They get to know each other across incredible social boundaries, cultural and religious boundaries, where you couldn't even imagine them talking to each other in certain parts of the world. So the idea of having a fair dispute resolution isn't just about resolving issues

when there is a conflict. It's actually about building relationships and building civil society discourse.

An elderly person who may have grown up in a small rural community in Ontario, who has retired to the city to be close to health care—she may have some health challenges that require greater attention than she can get in her community—or many elderly people who are moving downtown because they're empty-nesters or because they need to get health care. Sometimes very socially conservative folks are moving into a gay ghetto or a building that is 90% Tamil people who just arrived here from Sri Lanka, escaping what was a near genocide experience of a horrible civil war—kids who are growing up and going to school, who saw their parents shot.

We don't often talk about the roles that co-ops play in leadership. They don't only engage these folks; they help them build into leadership roles. I know there's many of us who represent those areas which have a lot of co-ops. You go to the awards ceremonies and you stand in the room and you look at who's leading these folks, who's getting elected—I mean, they're the most diverse place. If we had that kind of diversity here, it would kind of blow us away. But it's also the role that they play.

I just want to take a few minutes, because it's pretty hard to talk about the penalties and rules and make them really interesting, and we are a little bit in the entertainment mode. They say politics is Hollywood for ugly people—referring only to myself.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I was going to say that.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I am a thorn amongst all the roses here. Yes, I have more attractive people behind me, for contrast.

It's kind of extraordinary to me that all of these things go on in our society, Mr. Speaker, and they're what actually build our democracy. They're the things that actually build respect. They are things in which people work together on all kinds of community issues.

The co-ops in my area have launched community garden programs and local food programs. That started because people started talking to each other about their challenges, or they observed that an elderly person wasn't able to get shopping or afford food or had trouble doing that. People cook together, they take care of each other, and it is really quite extraordinary in what we sort of call the civility of our society.

I always find it extremely discouraging when I hear politicians use the word "taxpayer"—we pay taxes; it's an activity we do, we in government have the responsibility to be the prudent stewards of the public purse, to get value for people's tax dollars and to manage them officially—or "voters," because we're more than voters. Voting is an important responsibility—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, we're recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's my great privilege to introduce two guests today. We have with us Moreen Miller, who is president of the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association; and we have with us Ken Lucyshyn, vice-president of Walker Industries in the Niagara area, one of the largest quarrying operations in Ontario.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my pleasure today to introduce the family of page Caelius. We have here today Sam Musharbash, who is Caelius's father; Phoenix Tarantino, Caelius's brother; Michelina Tarantino, the maternal grandmother; and Amal Musharbash, the paternal grandmother. They are all here today to watch the Legislature, but especially to watch page Caelius.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Ajax-Pickering's newest page, Katherine Parker's, family today—we love her and call her Katie. I'd ask them to stand as I introduce the family. Her mother, Jillian Daffern; her father, John Parker; her grandfather Charles Daffern; Katie's uncle Paul Daffern and his daughters, Miss Veronica Daffern and Miss Cynthia Daffern; Katie's uncle Chris Daffern; and a special guest, Mr. Sim Chhabra from the riding of Mississauga-Cooksville.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce to you, sitting in the members' gallery with my assistant Gaggan Gill, who's next to Moreen, Karlie Pipher. Karlie Pipher is from my riding. She's a very avid curler; her boyfriend is Scott Howard—a member of the Ontario champions for seven years in a row, the Canadian champions and the World champion team, Glenn Howard. Welcome, Karlie.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm pleased this morning to introduce 11 recipients of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in my riding of St. Paul's. At noon today in room 230, I will be presenting medals to the following outstanding individuals who are here today in the gallery: Courtney Betty; Kathy Biasi; Brendan Caldwell; Peter O'Brian; Susan Poizner; Paulette Senior; Metta Spencer; John Legge; Harvey Manning; Stan Muthulingam; and Lisa Tobio. Many of their friends and family are in attendance today, and I'd like to extend a warm welcome to them as well. You are all welcome to join us at noon in room 230.

Mr. Michael Coteau: In the east gallery today, I'd like to welcome my aunt and uncle, Mr. Cosnel and Dorothy Baptise. Welcome to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

I would also like to take a moment to welcome Seneca Hill Public School, who are joining us here at the Legislature today.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to welcome here at Queen's Park Alex Lolua and John Grimshaw of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. They're here today to meet with me, and I welcome them here in the Legislature.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My friend the Minister of Children and Youth Services announced that some of the folks are down here today to receive their Queen's Dia-

mond Jubilee Medals, including my friend Stan Muthulingnam. But I just want to introduce, all the way from Malaysia, his aunt Sivahambikai Manikam, who's joining us all the way from Malaysia to see Stan get his medal.

I want to thank Minister Hoskins for the recognition and welcome our guest from halfway around the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just have one. We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the finance, economic development and tourism committee of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament of South Africa. Welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you for joining us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Acting Premier. On Tuesday, the Premier broke his code of silence to deliver a contrived theatrical performance for the cameras. His eleventh-hour melodramatic appeal to avoid accountability fooled no one. It didn't fool the press gallery, it didn't fool the Liberal caucus and it didn't fool the millions of Ontarians who are outraged by the government's cavalier response to squandering \$650 million.

The Premier's piece of performance art was disingenuous because everyone knows it was he—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member needs to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw, Speaker.

Wasn't genuine? Because everyone knows it was the Premier and only the Premier who sealed Minister Bentley's fate.

So I ask the Acting Premier: When will the government finally come to the aid of Minister Bentley and allow the minister to table all of the documents requested by this House?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think it's refreshing for everyone here if we look at what the situation is. This summer, the minister went in front of the estimates committee and was asked for documents and spoke about the competing interests.

The member who asked the question will know about competing interests, and I'd like to take him back to his time as energy minister and quote from the Globe and Mail here. January 16, 2002: "Energy Minister Jim Wilson is not able to speak freely about Ontario Power Generation, the main company he oversees as the province's electricity czar, because he has signed an unusual gag agreement.

"Under the agreement, he is to keep confidential any information the government-owned company tells him should be kept secret."

It goes on, Mr. Speaker: "The secrecy arrangement is sweeping and also covers information from almost anyone with business dealings with the corporation, such as contractors or suppliers."

There are competing interests here, and the member knows well about that from his past experience.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Nice try, House Leader, but it was the Ontario Securities Act that prevented me from speaking at the time. Unlike you guys, we don't break the law over here.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's pleas this week were as see-through and contrived as they were insulting. Nothing in this government happens without the consent of the Premier; we all know that. It was clearly his calculation to throw Mr. Bentley under the bus and to make the minister dispensable. The Premier denied Mr. Bentley the opportunity to come clean and table all of the requested documents. In doing so, he once again put himself first.

Ontarians deserve to know what happened. They deserve to know who made the decision to cancel the plants and who prevented the minister from tabling all of the documents. My question to the Acting Premier is this: Will the Premier testify at the committee and reveal how these cancellations came about?

Hon. John Milloy: I think we should let the committee do its work. But let me continue; I find this very interesting.

"Under the deal, Mr. Wilson acknowledged that disclosure of financial and commercial information from Ontario Power 'may prejudice significantly the competitive position of the corporation or result in undue loss of gain to parties other than the corporation,' according to an excerpt from his confidentiality agreement quoted in the Ministry of Finance brief.

"The corporation will identify such information as commercially sensitive at the time it provides the information to [Mr. Wilson] and will provide such information in confidence. [Mr. Wilson] will hold such identified information in confidence to such extent as may be permitted by law," it says."

This is the exact principle; the member should remember his time in cabinet. This is the exact principle that was before the committee.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: This is the principle that it wrestled with all summer. This is the principle that we've—
1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Stop the clock. I do want to make a quick comment, and that is: When the questions are being asked, I'm hearing noises coming from the same side. When the answers are being given, I'm hearing noise from the same side. And then I'm hearing cross-shots that aren't even germane to the question and answer. Please bring it down.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Acting Premier: \$650 million has been squandered saving Liberal seats, yet the

Premier and the Liberal caucus have not shown an ounce of regret or remorse. Not a single Liberal MPP or cabinet minister has apologized or accepted responsibility for this scandal.

Two years after cancelling the Oakville plant, the Premier and his government continue to stonewall every attempt to get to the bottom of this mess. A pattern is emerging, Speaker. The Liberal government has become debilitated by its own arrogance. The contempt motion was avoidable, but the Premier was unwilling to negotiate. He thumbed his nose at the opposition, the committee and this Legislature.

Acting Premier, now that we know that it was the Premier who threw Minister Bentley under the bus, as a leadership contender yourself, are you worried that you might be next?

Hon. John Milloy: You know, Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the race to the bottom finally reached its finish line. We heard the member who just asked the question—the PC House leader—speak openly about how he might be moving to send the Minister of Energy to jail. Two days earlier, the Leader of the Opposition said the same thing.

The fact of the matter is, this was avoidable, to quote the member back to him. It was avoidable because we came to the table with proposal after proposal to find a way to balance the interests, interests that he was well aware of as a minister himself, interests between the public interests and the rights of committees to access such documentation. We came forward with proposal after proposal. They were rejected by the opposition out of hand, and then, when we tried to move an amendment, a substantial amendment that would have seen the committee focusing on this very important question, they gagged debate in the Legislature and they would not let us speak, even though dozens and dozens of our members wanted to speak in defence of a fine man, the Minister of Energy.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the Acting Premier: As we continue to go through the gas plant cancellation documents, we're seeing more and more evidence of political involvement. It's a given fact now that crucial Ontario energy decisions are being made by Liberal campaign staff as opposed to energy experts, and while many of the documents point to this involvement, there are no documents turned over from the campaign people.

Why do you continue to protect your insiders and leave the energy minister to bear the brunt of this contempt hearing? Will you turn over all the documents the Speaker has ordered, and this time leave the whiteout in the desk drawer?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the government House leader

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, once again, I think we should let the committee do its work. The fact of the matter is that we have a committee of this Legislature that is going to be looking into the issue of documents;

36,000 pages were provided to the opposition—36,000 pages—and we went forward to the opposition with a way in which they could be provided to them that would protect public interest, public interest which the member from Simcoe—Grey is well aware of from his time as minister, and also acknowledge the rights of committees to ask for these documents.

It was a responsible way forward. It was complying with your ruling, and instead, Mr. Speaker, the opposition—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —dismissed it out of hand and would not sit at the table, roll up their sleeves and find a way in which this could be done. Instead, we've seen partisan politics go to a new low in the comments we've seen both inside and outside this place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: So let's talk a little bit about some of the documents we actually did receive. In Karen Howlett's Globe and Mail story the other day, she correctly details the Oakville sweetheart deal. The Liberals boast about getting the price reduced from \$17,000 to \$15,000 per month, but many contracts, Speaker, in actuality, are under \$10,000 a month. That's the real price.

So I don't know. Who do they think they're fooling, Speaker? Someone made a decision to award a \$3.3-billion sweetheart deal. Because the documents are redacted, let me ask: Was it the Premier? Was it the campaign team? Was it the former energy minister? Was it the Minister of Finance? Who was it, Speaker? You asked them to turn the documents over so we can get to the true documents in this scandal.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very happy to remind the member of who was in favour of the cancellation of these gas plants: It was every single party in this Legislature.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I ask him to go speak to the member for Halton. On June 1, 2010, he said, in this very place, "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree with them." The member for Halton, in a press release of September 14, 2010: "Minister, will you move the Oakville power plant?... I am asking the minister to consider moving this plant."

The member for Haldimand—Norfolk wrote a letter to the former Minister of Energy saying that "the potential for future alternate generation at Nanticoke to replace that slated for the proposed and disputed Clarkson plant should receive ample consideration."

And finally, the leader of the official opposition said on September 25, 2011, "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: At the Premier's Oakville news conference, where he smiled and laughed and shrugged off the seriousness of this matter at hand, basically it was, "So we blew two power plants. It's only \$650 million."

The Liberals cancelled the Oakville power plant and then went to Oakville to take credit for it, a \$650-million photo op.

Speaker, we saw hubris when we expected humility. Paying out taxpayers' money in Oakville to save a seat was wrong, and I would hope that you would admit that. Keeping the documents is wrong, and I hope you admit that. Ontarians need to hear this from their Premier.

Hon. John Milloy: What is wrong is an attempt by this government that was thwarted by the opposition to find co-operation when it came to releasing those documents in a way which would protect the taxpayers. And then, when we put forward a substantial amendment, notice was given to all the opposition parties for an amendment that would allow this committee to undertake important work and grapple with the issue of public responsibility, as well as the responsibility to committees to produce documents. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that they gagged us; they would not allow debate to go forward. They should be apologizing to the people of Ontario that democracy is not allowed to go forward in this place.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Saturday will be the one-year anniversary since the people of Ontario elected a minority government in this province. Has the government taken any lessons—

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is, has the government actually taken any lessons from their experience over this last year?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: One lesson I've learned is that a pleasure it is to work with the leader of the third party. Mr. Speaker, we have our differences, and I mean very profound differences, but we will as a government—and I am proud that a year ago today, Ontarians re-elected a Liberal government in this province. I am proud that they ferreted out the inaccuracies and all of the inconsistencies of both opposition parties, and I look forward to the next election, when Ontarians will give Dalton McGuinty a majority Liberal government because of the work we've been doing over the course—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

I found that comment unacceptable, so whoever it was, I would ask to withdraw. I ask the member to withdraw the comment.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I will withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait for a moment.

I do have a comment to make just before we continue. If the Attorney General and the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek would calm down in between ques-

tions, because—I didn't jump up right away, but I'm asking you to relax.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thanks very much, Speaker.

I hate to burst the Acting Premier's bubble, but people watching the Premier this week as he refused to take any responsibility for the hundreds of millions of dollars spent playing politics with gas plants worry that this government hasn't learned a thing.

The people of Ontario gave us all a clear message in the last election, and the by-election last month reinforced that message. Why does this government still seem to have trouble understanding that the people chose not to give them the power to do whatever they want whenever they want?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am proud that just this week we passed the healthy homes renovation tax credit.

The people of Ontario have been watching this circus in the Legislature, where the opposition are up to their ears in what I would call a vile besmirch of the Legislative Assembly and everyone associated with it. Parliamentarians will look back at this as a very dark moment in parliamentary history. They will see what this is all about, and that's why Ontarians want to talk about jobs, and that's what we're going to talk about.

Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we will not fire 55,000 teachers and nurses.

We appreciated the support of the leader of the third party on our budget. We appreciated the ability to get our throne speech passed. We are proud of the fact that October 2 marked the ninth anniversary of a Liberal government in this province, and we will continue to put forward a jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I'm very proud of the real results that New Democrats have been able to achieve in this minority Legislature. We brought fairness to the budget, we improved our health system and helped parents who need child care with their busy lives.

But the fact remains that this government has been more interested in helping themselves than helping the people who sent them here. We heard it again today, in fact, just this morning, when the Premier made it very clear that he won't appear at committee to explain his role in the private power mess. We saw it when the government spent the summer scrambling and failing to win a by-election. We see it as the government creates gridlock in this House, all the while complaining that nothing is getting done.

The people have sent the government a clear message. My question is a simple one: Are they actually listening?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There's another important anniversary of October 6, Mr. Speaker: It's one year since we've seen a plan from the NDP. The first anniversary is the paper anniversary, and all we hear from—we've seen no paper. All we hear is pandering. The NDP: never done pandering.

We've laid out a budget that is consistent with our platform, and that budget has been passed. We are going to continue to focus on jobs and the economy, on better schools and on better health care. The people of Ontario know who's talking about those issues.

Premier McGuinty, just this morning, was at the agri summit—an important industry to this province and an important contributor to gross domestic product. It is a growing industry that is contributing enormously.

Our focus is on jobs; our focus is on a brighter future, with a clear plan to do just that.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. The people who sent us here tell us that they're getting tired and frustrated with a government that clearly doesn't seem to get it.

Yvonne, a mother of three, wrote to us to say, "As a taxpayer who has pretty well single-handedly brought up three daughters, I am, and have been for a long time, used to turning over every penny three times before I spend it ... only to now realize that our hard-earned money is frivolously being spent in absolutely ludicrous ways...."

"I have been watching the actions in the Legislature a little bit and I cannot stand the way straightforward questions are not being answered."

Why is the government so unwilling to provide some of the basic answers that Yvonne deserves to hear, Speaker?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yvonne, I hope, will listen to the lack of any plan or any idea of what to do about the future. Yvonne will also be aware that the leader of the third party says she's going to raise everyone's pay, give money to all kinds of organizations, balance the budget, and somehow everything is going to be just fine. The leader of the third party says we won't have nuclear power; we won't have coal power. The leader of the party has no plan.

So Yvonne, I say to you, if you're listening today: Look carefully at our plan. We have worked hard over the last year, and the eight years before that, to build a better and fairer society. There are, no doubt, more things to do, Mr. Speaker, but we will continue to focus on jobs, to focus on health care and education. I'm going to do everything I can to convince Yvonne that the best party in this Legislature, the best party to form a government, is the Ontario Liberal Party, led by Dalton McGuinty.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think the point was that Yvonne is saying that actions speak louder than words.

Ann, a senior on fixed income, writes, "I am disgusted and furious [at the government's] many secret deals. My hydro bill ... is becoming unmanageable. One friend I know says she will go back to oil lamps and wood as she

cannot continue to pay these bills and they are still climbing."

A constituent named Nathan writes, "I am frustrated that Dalton McGuinty can, on one hand, claim that we need to close provincial parks ... to pay down the deficit, while at the same time making financial mistakes such as ... gas power plant cancellation costs that are climbing into the hundreds of millions of dollars."

This is what everyday Ontarians are saying. These are the kinds of emails and letters that we're receiving daily. What does the government have to say to people like Nathan, who expect a little bit of accountability from a government that has taken so much from them?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, last week I spoke to Betty, who said to me that she's glad that we no longer have diesel generators in our downtown cities.

I spoke to Andrew, who says he's glad that our party has put a premium on closing coal-fired plants and has laid out a plan to replace that power in a cost-effective way.

I spoke to Peter, who told me that the only party in this Legislature that has a real plan is the Ontario Liberal Party.

I spoke to Mark, who said to me that the third party ought to say how it's going to balance the budget without laying people off and to stop pandering to every interest group across the province—no darn plan; never done pandering.

This government will continue to fight for working Ontarians with a strong plan for job growth, better schools and better health care. We look forward to meeting you on the campaign—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful. You can look confused, but it's not helpful using persons' names.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it never ceases to amaze me how out of touch the government across the way has become. People are feeling the squeeze in tough times, and they don't see a government on their side.

Marie from Ottawa tells us, "My salary has gone down \$22,000, and everything, particularly hydro, is going up. It is not the Ontario I grew up in. I fear for the future of my children."

The Hartley family adds, "[We are] very concerned about how the Liberals have attacked the middle and working class."

Peter, from the London area, adds, "There needs to be accountability for this tremendous waste. The ways we could have better used that money are too numerous to count. It's criminal to abuse power as it appears to have been abused."

When will people like Peter see the accountability that they expect from their government instead of the hubris that we get from the Acting Premier?

1100

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I spoke to Burinder, who can see through the leader of the third party. He said to me that he recognizes that they have no plan to get the province's finances in order.

I had the opportunity to speak to Mohammed from Toronto, who said to me that governments have to come to terms with the fiscal challenges they're met with at the same time as they make important investments in education and in health care.

I spoke with Jeanne from Sudbury and she told me what a good job Rick Bartolucci has done for northern Ontario.

We can see through that. You don't speak any more for average Ontarians than we do. This caucus, this government, represents Main Street Ontario. Our plans are about Main Street Ontario. It's about a better life, better schools, better health care, and I stand with those Ontarians who can see through that. We look forward to the next election when we'll have a vigorous debate about all these important issues.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Acting Premier. It's becoming increasingly clear that the Premier of Ontario was a student of Machiavelli who is prepared to sacrifice the reputation of one of his trusted colleagues in order to save his own.

Even as the Premier asked the opposition to reconsider our position on the government's breach of parliamentary privilege, reminding us that the Minister of Energy is a good man with a good professional reputation, the Premier unceremoniously throws the minister under the bus—all this to protect the Liberal Party's campaign team and, most likely, the Premier's own involvement in the decision to cancel the gas plants.

The Minister of Energy must, in his heart of hearts, believe this treatment is grossly unfair to him personally. How can the minister possibly continue to serve with credibility when the Premier has shown him such callous disregard, potentially leading to the ruin of his professional reputation, all in the name of protecting the back-room boys who are apparently calling the shots within this government?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I have a tremendous amount of respect for the member who just asked the question, but I quite frankly am very, very disappointed that he would be dragged down to those levels by his colleagues.

The simple fact of the matter is that there are some very serious issues at play here: the issue of solicitor-client privilege, the issue of commercial confidentiality—something that, as we found out this morning, his seat-mate knows a great deal about as a minister. It's about balancing those issues with the rights and responsibilities of committees.

We came forward to the opposition on several occasions to put forward plans so that we could co-operate

and find a way to move forward with this, a way to deal with this, a way to charge a committee of the Legislature to look into this very serious matter, and what the opposition did is, they used their majority to go after a member of this Legislature, the Minister of Energy, an honourable minister, to the point where we have colleagues over there, members over there, who are openly speaking about sending him to jail.

The member who just asked a question, an honourable member—stand up and separate yourself from your colleagues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Speaker, it need not have come to this. There were numerous decision points when the government could have done the right thing and consistently chose not to. The government could have released the requested documents to the estimates committee when first asked. They could have released all the requested documents, as the Speaker suggested, instead of whiting many of them out, most likely in an effort to delete the involvement of the government and the Liberal campaign team.

There could have been a public apology or at least some expression of contrition for the breach of parliamentary privilege leading to a potential finding of contempt, or more appropriately, in our parliamentary system of government, a minister—even the First Minister of the government—could have assumed responsibility and resigned.

Will the government House leader, on behalf of the government, now apologize to this House for the breach of parliamentary privilege, and will he now promise to ensure the release of all relevant documents to the finance committee without whiting them out?

Hon. John Milloy: Yes, there were ways to avoid this, Mr. Speaker. The government came forward to the opposition with two separate proposals, asking them to work with us to find a way to balance the various principles that were in play, as came forward from your ruling. They said no.

So what did we do? We came forward with an amendment in this Legislature, an amendment which would have charged the committee, which is right now holding hearings in this matter, to look into these important principles. It is outrageous what the opposition did. As well as musing out loud about sending an honourable member to jail, they stifled debate—they stifled debate in this Legislature through the passage of a closure motion.

Mr. Speaker, they have raced to the bottom, and as far as I'm concerned, they've crossed the finish line. That question is unbecoming of a member with as sterling a reputation as member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, on September 17, the Ministry of Labour announced that it was hiring an additional 18 employment standards officers to protect vulnerable

workers such as gas station attendants. Three days later, 19 employment standards officers were told they were out of a job.

Does the government actually plan to make the workplaces in this province safer for gas station attendants like Jayesh Prajapati, or was this just all for good publicity?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Over the last three years, the Ministry of Labour has made very significant progress in dealing with employment standards claims. Because of those investments, we've eliminated a huge backlog in claims and upgraded our processes.

We're now at the point where we're going to shift our focus to more proactive inspections, and we're doing that. Over the last year and a half, we've added 20 proactive inspectors, and last month we announced another 18. We've shifted our staff from dealing with incoming calls and processing the claims, now to providing more proactive enforcement of the ESA.

We know that our government has made some very significant progress in those employment standards in the province and with that temporary task force that we invested in back in 2010 to help reduce the backlog. That's a very significant thing, and that proactive inspection is what I think the people of Ontario want us to do: to get out of the office and out into the workplaces.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, you can't do proactive inspections without the adequate resources through the employment standards officers. With each passing day, it becomes clearer that Ontario must do more to protect vulnerable workers like Jayesh Prajapati. Jayesh earned little more than minimum wage, and because he feared he'd have to pay for stolen gas, he took it upon himself to protect himself and to protect his family.

How can this government even pretend to care about the rights of vulnerable workers when it secretly fires front-line workers just a few short days after it publicly announces its plans to protect them?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Speaker, my heart goes out to Jayesh's family. A man is dead. A woman is now without her husband, a son is without his father, and his family is now grieving, obviously.

Certainly, if any member has any suggestions on how to improve in a meaningful way how we enforce employment standards, my door is always open. As the Minister of Labour, I want everyone to go to work at the beginning of the day and come home safely at the end of the day.

We are the first government to conduct proactive inspections and employment standards blitzes. Based on this incident, my ministry has put in increased staffing with regard to employment standards at gas stations. We have put the resources in. We're seeing the results of those proactive inspections. I welcome any other suggestion the member may have.

IMMIGRANTS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, my riding of

Oak Ridges–Markham is a very diverse community. People from around the world call our community home, contributing to our local economy and enriching our local culture, so I know first-hand of the challenges our newcomers face when it comes to integrating into their new communities and putting their skills to work in the economy.

Recent federal cutbacks to settlement funding have not made overcoming these challenges any easier. That's why members of my community were pleased to hear that Ontario was taking leadership by developing its own immigration strategy. As a first step, Minister, you announced the creation of the Expert Roundtable on Immigration to consult with stakeholders, gather information and report back to you. I understand that the roundtable delivered their recommendations to you yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us what their recommendations were and how they will affect the development of Ontario's immigration strategy?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for her excellent work in the riding as well.

Yesterday, I was pleased to receive the report of the Expert Roundtable on Immigration entitled *Expanding Our Routes to Success*. The recommendations addressed a number of issues, including immigrant selection, settlement, integration and foreign qualification recognition. The expert roundtable was chaired by Julia Deans, the former CEO of CivicAction. It included business leaders, academics, economists and immigration experts.

I also want to recognize and thank my parliamentary assistant, the member for Windsor West. She concurrently made consultations across the province. Combined, their findings and recommendations will contribute to the development of our long-term immigration strategy. It will also contribute to our ongoing discussions with the federal government.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I know that the people of Oak Ridges–Markham will be pleased to know of this progress. Our newcomers arrive with an incredible amount of skills, knowledge and experience, and an incredible drive to put their talents to work.

We're also fortunate to have great organizations like the Social Services Network of York region, which devotes itself to helping people from the South Asian community get settled and find work. This organization provides outreach programs, including weekly meetings, that provide all-encompassing support to newcomers who need to adapt, contribute and prosper in our Canadian society.

It's clear that newcomers play a vital role in our province. That's why we need to ensure that they have the support they need to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: How will Ontario's immigration strategy support our goal of helping newcomers contribute to our economy?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member is absolutely correct: Newcomers are key to Ontario's future economic growth and prosperity. Recent labour market projections indicate that in the next 10 years, over 625,000 new workers will be required in Ontario. Our province needs skilled immigrants to fill these jobs and boost our economic growth.

That's why we're developing a strategy that will focus on how immigration can best support the province's economy and help immigrants succeed. To achieve our goal, we welcome information and expert advice, including the expert roundtable. It's critical that we get this strategy right. We're developing an evidence-based strategy that will help further Ontario's prosperity and help immigrants succeed. We know that when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, you should be ashamed that, as the head of finances, you allowed \$650 million of Ontario's hard-earned tax dollars to be squandered, which resulted in nothing. Let me define "nothing" for you, Minister: Not a single job was created, and no energy was added to the grid. With nothing to show for it, you've added even more Liberal scandal money to the provincial deficit. Ontario is in a financial, economic crisis, and it's obvious by your actions that all of the above could lead to a contempt motion.

Minister, as Ontario's finance minister, will you take responsibility for giving the Liberal campaign team the green light to add \$650 million to Ontario's deficit for nothing?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am proud that Ontario is back from the brink of blackouts and brownouts, the legacy of that government. You can swim in this bathwater as long as you want. The people of Ontario want to talk about jobs. They want to talk about the economy.

I've just been informed that General Motors of Canada is adding a new shift at Oshawa and a new shift at St. Catharines, Mr. Speaker. That is what Ontarians are looking for. I remember when that party and their leader called our support of General Motors "corporate welfare." We reject that.

You can swim in that bathwater all you want; we're going to talk about jobs and a better economy. You want to lay people off; we want to hire them. That's what we're going to talk about, and you just keep swimming in that dirty bathwater as long as you want.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Minister. That was a great campaign speech, but my money is still on Kathleen Wynne to win the leadership.

Minister, you've lost control of the province's finances. You've allowed scandals to be financed by Ontario's credit card and doubled the deficit. You've presided over billions of dollars wasted at eHealth and Ornge, and you've wasted \$650 million on gas plants for the seat-saver program. All the while, you have allowed

the unemployment rate in Ontario to rise, and 600,000 men and women are struggling to find jobs. Our economy is hurting, and Minister, you've been in charge of the finances while health and education dollars are being wasted in scandals.

Minister, will you now please take responsibility for giving the Liberal campaign team the green light to waste 650 million Ontario taxpayer dollars?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, Ontarians understand that the world went through a dramatic economic decline, and that's why the federal Conservative government went from a healthy surplus to the largest deficit in federal history. That's why the federal Conservative government has added debt all over.

I think Ontarians see through that empty rhetoric. I think they see through the very dirty bathwater that they want to swim in. They want us to work on the economy, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're doing. That's why we invested in General Motors and Chrysler. That's why we are looking to keep teachers in classrooms and nurses in hospitals. That party wants to lay off teachers, lay off nurses. We reject that.

Yes, it is a campaign speech—a campaign for the government of Ontario under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, who has taught them more than one lesson about what's right and important for the future of Ontario. That's what this government's about and that's what we're going to fight for.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I want to make a point here: I've been hearing it on all sides, where people, either heckling or when they're asking or answering a question, are referring to members by their names. There's a tradition that you do not do that, and there's a reason for it: It is to become less personal and more focused on issues. I'm going to ask all members to be reminded of not using individual names in this House.

New question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Faith leaders are gathering in Ontario cities this Thanksgiving week, and the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition is actually here today at Queen's Park. They remind us that many of our neighbours are suffering. They also raise an extremely important question: Why has the government cut the community start-up and maintenance benefit by 50% and cancelled the home repair benefit when these two supports helped tens of thousands of low-income Ontarians stay in their homes and out of homelessness?

Hon. John Milloy: I first of all would like to welcome ISARC to the Legislature today. I've had the pleasure of working with that fine organization for many years as both an MPP and as a minister.

As I've said before in this House, I don't think anyone has a monopoly when it comes to compassion or concern for those who are in need. I was very pleased that with

the budget last spring, one of the few ministries that received a substantial increase in its budget was my ministry, as well as that of children and youth services. Although it was a substantial increase in relation to what else was going on across the board, at the same time there are pressures on my ministry, and we've had to find ways to do things differently and to make dollars go further.

One of those ways is a new approach to homelessness funding, a new approach to dealing with these housing issues. It is the creation of the community homelessness prevention initiative, which takes a number of programs—some of them under my ministry, some of them under the Ministry of Housing—gives them to the Ministry of Housing and then gives municipalities the opportunity to have a lot more flexibility in dealing with homelessness issues. We have also taken the CSUMB program—and a portion of that funding is going into this pot of money to allow municipalities to have the flexibility to deal with this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Minister of Community and Social Services: This government will spend hundreds of millions of dollars to move gas plants and to protect its own interests, but it won't help people struggling with illness or abusive relationships find or keep a safe home. Cutting these benefits hurts our neighbours and it won't save money, because people who lose these benefits will be forced to move to higher-cost shelters and to hospitals.

I ask again, why did the government make these hurtful cuts before even hearing the recommendations of their only social assistance review commission?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I've told this story before. I remember going to a poverty forum as a candidate in the last election. I went through the NDP platform, and I believe it took me four times to find their piece on poverty, which was a couple of bullets at the bottom of a page, I think, under "natural resources."

That member has no monopoly when it comes to compassion for the poor in this province, and I am proud of what our government has done, things like the Ontario child benefit; the raising of minimum wage; the raising of ODSP and OW rates; the fact that we've seen 325,000 jobs created; job retraining programs; our investments in education—all of it focused on helping those who are in need to come into the mainstream of the economy.

I'm proud of what we've done. I'm looking forward to the social assistance review that should be out in the next number of weeks. It's going to be an opportunity for us to strengthen the system even more.

1120

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Our government is making record investments in public transit, including four new LRT lines in Toronto, one of which will benefit

directly my riding of York South–Weston. My constituents rely on public transit to get to work and school and to reduce congestion on the roads.

Some of them have called or emailed me recently, expressing some concerns or confusion regarding the use of private-sector partners. Speaker, can the minister inform the House on how the LRT lines will be built and operated?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, I thank the member for her leadership on transit, and under the leadership of the Toronto Liberal caucus, we are investing \$8.4 billion in four new LRT lines in Toronto, the largest infrastructure project in Canada today.

We have finalized a partnership with the TTC. Together, we are building a seamless, integrated and reliable transit system that Toronto commuters expect and deserve. This agreement allows the government to work with the private sector to design, build, finance and maintain the new lines. At the same time, this new agreement allows for the TTC to operate the LRT system; namely, the TTC will be responsible for vehicle drivers, station operators and ticket staff; safety and enforcement; and dispatch and control of vehicle access throughout the system.

Importantly, the private sector is responsible for any cost overruns or delays. Despite the fictitious claims from the NDP, this project remains publicly owned.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for that update. I'm glad to see that we are making great progress with our partners at the TTC.

The people in my riding, in York South–Weston, will be pleased to hear that we are moving forward with these new lines, and the people of Toronto want to see transit projects built. The TTC is a mix of subways, buses, streetcars, and now LRTs. Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain how the LRT lines will fit in the existing system?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The new LRT lines will be seamlessly integrated into the existing transit system. That means riders will pay one fare and easily transfer throughout the entire system, just like they currently do, between subways, buses and streetcars.

We are proud to be the only government in the past 20 years to actually build transit in the city of Toronto. Our record \$8.4-billion investment in LRTs will improve transit operations for riders, reduce congestion and keep our air clean. We reject the approach of the PCs, who actually filled in a subway under construction and who consistently vote against transit and strategic infrastructure funding. We reject their constant opposition to building new transit. The McGuinty government is getting the job done on public transit.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Acting Premier. In the estimates committee we asked for documents from the Minister of Energy, the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority, but there's one glaring

exemption from what we've received so far: Nothing, not one document, was either written to or from the former Minister of Energy, now the economic development minister.

That speaks to two things: Either the former minister was negligent in not keeping up with a vital part of his portfolio, or the government is withholding 100% of those documents. So the question is this: Is it negligence, or is this government covering something up?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Rob Leone: I withdraw.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what's negligent: What's negligent is stifling debate in this Legislature.

The fact of the matter is that we came forward with 36,000 pages of documents that were provided to the opposition, that were provided to the committee. The story behind those documents: I think members are well aware they have to do with balancing the rights of public interest, the rights of solicitor-client privilege—something recognized as a constitutional right—with the right of committees to examine documents.

At the same time, we came forward with an amendment that asked the committee to look into this very, very important issue, and that member and his colleagues used the opposition majority to stifle debate in this Legislature, to not allow our amendment to come forward, and now are openly musing about punitive action against a distinguished member of this Legislature, the Minister of Energy. I think that member has a lot of apologizing to do.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, the government House leader sounds like a broken record defending that government's broken record. The Liberals say the Minister of Energy is an honourable man, a good man, yet they exploit that very honourability, that very good loyalty that they have presented. They have chosen that minister to be a fall guy. There's nothing to say other than that.

The truth is, the Liberals could have released those documents sooner. They could have avoided this contempt debacle that they currently face, instead of burying a friend for selfish political reasons. Why does that Liberal government continue to value the energy minister's political career less than their own political legacy?

Hon. John Milloy: I want to ask the honourable member, why does he stand here and say that someone is guilty until proven innocent? Why does he stand here and prejudge the work of the committee? Not only does he have no respect for debate in this Legislature, but now he and his colleagues are standing up and prejudging the work of a committee that has not even begun. There has been a committee of this Legislature charged with looking into the issues around these documents. We tried to focus that committee on valuable work, but for partisan, vindictive reasons, they are going after a member of this Legislature, they are prejudging the work of the committee, and as far as I'm concerned, they owe the Minister of Energy an apology and they owe an apology to the

people of Ontario for not allowing democracy to continue in this Legislature.

MINISTRY SPENDING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Last week, the Ministry of Natural Resources unveiled some of its transformation plan, which includes significant cuts to jobs, parks and the long-standing Ontario ranger program.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And there's the problem. Nobody heard—luckily I did—that it was going to the Minister of Natural Resources. So let's keep it down.

Continue, please.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Speaker.

For the past number of months, northerners have been on edge, worrying about whether the cuts will hit their communities, because in a northern community like Ignace, with a population of 1,000 or 1,500 people, the loss of only a few jobs can have a devastating effect on the local economy.

Nipigon mayor Richard Harvey said that he has had personal assurances from the minister that the MNR office in his town will not be closed. My question to the minister is simple. Can he provide the same assurances that the MNR won't cut jobs in other small towns across the northwest that are outside of his riding?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you for the question; I appreciate it. Certainly our ministry transformation plan, which we unveiled last week, and the operational changes that came with it are focused squarely on our determination to maintain our commitment to the core values and the core priorities of the Ministry of Natural Resources, including the protection of our natural resources, conserving biodiversity, supporting sustainable development and protecting Ontarians from natural hazards such as fires. Certainly our fiscal challenges have required us to make some tough decisions, but they are decisions based on maintaining those key priorities.

In terms of our magnificent Ontario parks system, we had 334 protected parks last week; we have 334 parks this week. In terms of our youth ranger program, we're moving to a program that will employ just as many people next summer.

These are the things that are important to Ontarians, and we're very committed in our ministry to maintaining those priorities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the Minister of Natural Resources: People in northeastern Ontario are also outraged with this decision, which once again suggests we are second-class citizens in this province.

This summer, the Premier visited Elliot Lake following the tragic collapse of the mall, and he committed to helping rebuild the community and the local economy. Since the mall collapse, Elliot Lakers have experienced drastic job losses, unemployment and an uncertain future.

Now we have learned that they are closing Mississaggi Provincial Park, resulting in further job losses in the community and across the north.

Is this the government's idea of helping out Elliot Lake and other northern communities?

1130

Hon. Michael Gravelle: As I've pointed out, our ministry certainly has fiscal challenges, and we need to recognize that. These were very, very tough decisions. But certainly in terms of our change in designation of parks from operating to non-operating, we were looking at visitation rates being low, we were looking at low campground occupancy and, may I say, some significant capital infrastructure needs for those parks.

Indeed, I will be sitting down and meeting with a number of northeastern Ontario mayors over the next couple of weeks, and I've had a number of conversations with others as well. We are very committed to maintaining our core priorities in the Ministry of Natural Resources, ones that you would expect us to maintain, such as protecting our natural resources and conserving our biodiversity, and sustainable development. These are important to us. We recognize how tough it is, but we're making the most thoughtful decisions we possibly can.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Earlier this fall, a group of innovators in the agri-food industry from across southwestern Ontario were honoured in my riding of Guelph with agri-food innovation awards for contributing to the success of Ontario's agri-food sector. I know from my colleagues in Peterborough and Sudbury that there have been regional award ceremonies in their communities as well.

Promoting Ontario foods and celebrating local success stories is part of the McGuinty government's plan for a stronger agri-food industry that creates jobs to help grow the province's economy. I was pleased to attend the presentation of the Premier's agri-food innovation awards today. So, Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister tell us more about all the award winners?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member from Guelph; we all know that Guelph is agriculture's Silicon Valley for innovation. There were some 50 people who received regional innovation awards this year, and just this morning, I was honoured to be joined by a number of colleagues. I appreciate the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane making a special effort to come out—good to see you there this morning—as well as other colleagues.

I was honoured to join the Premier at the agri-food summit. The Premier presented awards: The Premier's award for agri-food innovation went to Phil Short of Vineland Station. Short is a fruit grower, shipper and entrepreneur whose company, Vortex Packaging, created a recyclable and stackable fruit basket that has been widely adopted. And I was very proud to present Burning Kiln Winery of St. Williams with the minister's award for agri-food innovation for repurposing and adapting tobacco kilns to dry grapes, a process that has resulted in

award-winning wines, one of which is served daily in the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: This year's award winners were very impressive. With the eighth Premier's agri-food summit taking place today, it's a great reminder that since 2007, 285 producers, processors and agri-food organizations from across the province have been recognized at the annual Premier's summit on agri-food innovation. It's very fitting that, as was mentioned by the minister here yesterday, this week is Agriculture Week in Ontario, and the government is gathering with stakeholders to discuss agriculture and celebrate innovation in that industry. Can the minister tell this House what other messages were shared to the summit this morning?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm delighted to share some of the other messages. The most important message is, we want to celebrate our success in Ontario.

Interjection: Lots of good news out there.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: There is a lot of good news out there.

We want to celebrate not only our success, but we want to celebrate our innovations. We want to celebrate that our producers and processors produce and process the best-tasting, most nutritious and safest food in the world. Today, in fact, Premier McGuinty, at his summit on agri-food innovation, offered the \$10 local food challenge, asking families to shift—not spend more—simply shift \$10 of their local spending every week to purchase Ontario products, and if every family in Ontario did that, we could increase food sales by \$2.4 billion and create 10,000 new jobs.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question today is for the Attorney General. In order to justify the \$650-million decision to cancel these plants, we've heard cries of public outcry, energy inefficiency, load management and use of alternative energy. But there's really only one reason, isn't there? Your lawyer has been warning of it all along. The few unredacted documents we could piece together reveal the mad scramble among bureaucrats pitching creative excuses and evaluating the fallout of each; namely, public misfeasance.

We've also discovered that the former Minister of Energy asked for legal counsel, a Coles Notes version on tort of misfeasance, which is an abuse of public power and public office, including its defences. Minister, were you aware that your lawyers were giving advice about misfeasance to the former Minister of Energy, and does that make you responsible?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'll refer this to the House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have to repeat it again: When it comes to the question of cancelling the gas plants, there was something very rare in this House; there was unanimity. We heard from the Progressive Conservative Party, we heard from the NDP, and we ourselves reached the same conclusion, that we shouldn't

go ahead with them. In fact, I'm told, and I've heard during some of the debate before they stifled it, that the fact of the matter was there were robocalls from their own candidate to people about how they wanted to cancel the plant.

The fact of the matter is, we cancelled the plant, then we went ahead with negotiations with one of the companies, and at that point, documents were asked for. We tried to work with the opposition to deal with those documents, to have the committee charged with the work to deal with this very, very important issue of the two competing principles. Mr. Speaker, the opposition have blocked us at every turn.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: That wasn't even remotely close to answering the question. I usually do enjoy the Attorney General's answers; he's usually quite entertaining.

Squandering what will likely be billions in failed energy projects for political gain is an outright abuse of government power, but then so is the breach of parliamentary privilege. Perhaps as the government's lawyer, you may also advise about what's worse: the former Minister of Energy's public misfeasance versus the current energy minister's contempt for Parliament. The extensive eulogizing about the life and character of the current energy minister says only one thing: His team has selected him as the go-to fall guy. But is he really the right fall guy?

There's a third, unseen dark force that's been nodding and winking all along. The Premier needs to step up, admit he was wrong, take responsibility and apologize to all the hard-working families of Ontario. Thus far the only people paying for the egregious mishandling of the energy file are the taxpayers, and it's time one of you owned up to this mess. Which one is it going to be?

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to correct the record. Earlier today, I said that I didn't think the opposition could get any lower. I want to correct it: They just did get lower. That member stood up here, and he was judge, prosecutor and jury on the Minister of Energy. The fact is that there is a committee of this House that is going to be looking into this matter, and yet members stand up here on that side of the House, and they prejudice what's going on. Quite frankly, it's disgusting.

We saw 36,000 pages of documents that were put out. There were efforts by this side of the House to find a co-operative agreement with the other side. Instead, for vindictive, gutter politics, they have gone after an honourable member of this house, and they should apologize to him.

They should apologize to this committee because this committee does not deserve to be prejudged. Let's let the committee do its work. Let's look at its findings, and let's reach a conclusion on this important issue.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The west gallery is graced by the good Dr. Carolyn Bennett, the MP for St.

Paul's. We welcome you to be here. I stole the thunder of the member from St. Paul's.

This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: It's my privilege to introduce many front-line workers in first response. I will be making some specific introductions in the course of my remarks later, but I just generally want to extend a very warm welcome to all of our first responders who are here with us this afternoon.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: To my right, I'd like to welcome all the first responders in the gallery here and, in particular, Mr. Russell from the police, who is a resident in my riding of Pickering-Scarborough East. Welcome, everyone, to Queen's Park.

Mr. John O'Toole: I know all members will want to welcome all of the first responders and thank them for what they do—and look forward to the discussion today on Bill 120 with Mr. Klees.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to welcome, from my riding of Burlington, Carolyn Scholey, a constituent who was here on September 27 to show support for Bill 110 and who has returned today to do the same. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce Chris York, Kim Slook, Pat Hudak and Shannon Edsall. I think they're making their way, actually, through security at the moment to have time to listen to the Ombudsman CAS bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further introductions?

I would like to invite to the Speaker's gallery—acknowledge the member from London—no.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Elgin-Middlesex-London.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):—Elgin-Middlesex-London, a member from 1999 through until 2011 and Speaker of the House, Steve Peters. Mr. Peters is here with a group of people in the agriculture business to listen to the proceedings this afternoon.

We welcome all of our guests today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PAUL HENDERSON

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased today to rise to talk about and recognize a very special man from Lucknow, Ontario. He is from Huron-Bruce, and he was born during the winter, on a sleigh, actually in between Lucknow and Kincardine. He's described as a man of faith, integrity and heart. He played for the Maple Leafs and the Red Wings and has had a very respectable NHL career, but when you hear his name, you think of one

legendary goal for Canada. If you guessed Paul Henderson, you're correct.

The recent celebrations this past weekend of the 40th anniversary of the summit series gave cause for everyone to remember where they were when "the goal" was scored. The fact of the matter is, as my husband reminded me, it just wasn't about that one particular goal. Paul Henderson actually scored the winning goal in each of the final three games.

In the spirit of the 40th anniversary of the 1972 summit series and support of a hometown hero, I feel very strongly that Paul Henderson should be installed into the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you.

In game 7, the Soviet goalie stopped Paul's first shot, but he recovered the rebound and slid it past the fallen goaltender to give Canada the 6-5 lead with only 34 seconds left to play. The goal won the game, the series and the hearts of all Canadians across this nation. The team returned home to massive crowds, and Paul Henderson became a national hero.

Back home, Paul is known for his big heart, his support for his hometown and his love and dedication to the game of hockey. I'm proud to take this opportunity to recognize Paul Henderson today.

PETER PAVLOVSKI

Ms. Soo Wong: It is with a heavy heart that I stand today to pay tribute to the life of my constituent Peter Pavlovski, who passed away tragically on September 14 while working on the job he loved as a TTC road master.

Peter was a loving husband, father, brother, uncle and friend. As his niece said during the funeral service, "Our Cheecho was the nucleus of our family. He always brought us all together for special occasions which centred around great-tasting food."

Peter's family was his life. He lived, worked and breathed for them. As his wife, Gina, told me, anything any family member or friend needed, he was there fixing, repairing or helping, even if it meant there was no time to fix something in his own home.

Peter worked at the Toronto Transit Commission for 22 years. He was first hired as a summer student and worked his way up to subway track maintenance. He was so proud when he was promoted to the position of TTC road master. He worked hard at his job; he made sure the job was done right. Most importantly, he treated his colleagues with respect.

On behalf of myself, the residents of Scarborough-Agincourt and everyone in this House, I offer my deepest condolences to his wife, Gina, their three children, Kelsey, Marissa and Andrew, and their entire family.

AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: As farmers prepare to harvest their remaining crops and as we prepare to celebrate

Thanksgiving, let's remember where and from whom that food is coming.

I am pleased to speak today in celebration of Ontario Agriculture Week. I want to thank my predecessor, the former MPP Bert Johnson, for taking the initiative to establish Ontario Agriculture Week in 1998.

Ontario's agri-food sector contributes more than \$33 billion to our economy each year and employs nearly 700,000 people. In Perth county, 20% of all jobs are tied to agriculture. In Wellington county, agriculture represents in excess of \$433 million in total gross farm receipts.

Along with many of my colleagues from all parties, I was pleased to attend the International Plowing Match held in Roseville two weeks ago, and I am looking forward to next year's match, which is being held in Perth-Wellington near the town of Mitchell. This will be the 100th anniversary of the International Plowing Match.

Tomorrow, October 5, I am hosting two open houses to mark Ontario Agriculture Week. I invite my constituents to join me from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Arthur Public Library, or in Mitchell, at the Royal Canadian Legion, from 2 to 4 p.m.

I thank all the dedicated, hard-working farm families in Perth-Wellington and across the entire province for putting food on our table. As the saying goes: If you ate today, thank a farmer.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN TIBET

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise today to draw the House's attention to an international situation occurring in Tibet. Right now, almost 40 Tibetans have set themselves on fire and burned themselves to death. Nuns and monks are routinely rounded up, arrested, tortured and many executed.

Tibetans are not allowed to speak their language or to have a picture of His Holiness the Dalai Lama up in their homes.

The reason I bring the House's attention to all of this is that I understand the Premier is leading a trade delegation to China, but not only to China, into the territory of Tibet.

I would ask what Amnesty International asks, I would ask what Tibetans around the world ask, I would ask what His Holiness himself has asked, and that is not that we do not do trade with China, not that we do not travel there, but that when we do, we raise the issue of human rights with those we speak to, particularly as this government is going to go into the occupied region of Tibet and particularly because I hope they witness some of which I've described.

Again, I rise in compassion for those who suffer in Tibet. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has called for autonomy for that region. I plead with this government: Do not go on a trade mission without mentioning human rights in Tibet.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I rise today to speak to a very important issue. Tomorrow, October 5, is World Teach-

ers' Day. Growing up in a middle-class family, education was indeed my passport into today's hyper-competitive world—a passport that would not have been possible without the wonderful teachers who not only taught me reading, writing and arithmetic, but who consoled me when I needed consoling, who cheered me on when I needed to be encouraged and who taught me that the values of discipline, hard work and integrity are just as important as getting good grades.

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It is these teachers, and every teacher around the world, that I rise today to salute. Closer to home here in Ontario, we have one of the best public school systems in the English-speaking world, and that of course would not be possible without our teachers—so a special shout-out to all of our teachers here in Ontario.

Even closer to home, I'm proud that the Dufferin-Peel Catholic school board, of which my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville is a part, will be making a special effort to recognize World Teachers' Day and thank the close to 6,000 teachers in their board who do the terrific work that they do every single day.

Mr. Speaker, I do hope that you and the rest of the members of this Legislature will join me in thanking the teachers of this province for the excellent job that they do every single day.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: I wish to update the House on the hospital projects currently under way in Wellington–Halton Hills.

Georgetown Hospital is being transformed to meet the needs of our residents in the 21st century with a new and expanded emergency department and the installation of a new CT scanner and integrated diagnostic imaging department. Last May, we broke ground beside the hospital to kick off the project, and construction is well under way. One year ago, the Minister of Health joined us in Georgetown to announce a provincial grant of up to \$2.6 million towards the project. Our community continues to be very grateful for this support.

The planning for our new Groves Memorial Community Hospital, in the township of Centre Wellington, continues to gain momentum. Recently the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network endorsed the program and service elements which Groves had submitted, and the LHIN urged the ministry to prioritize the determination of project volumes and bed numbers. Next steps include working with Infrastructure Ontario on cost estimates for design and construction, and meetings with hospital staff and stakeholders to help shape the project design. An architectural firm has been selected and hired, and we believe we're on track to begin the tendering process by 2014-15, which was the date announced by the province last August.

All of this is great news for my constituents, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank everyone at the Georgetown and

Groves hospitals for embracing the promise of the future in local health care excellence.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Last week, I was joined by the member for Nickel Belt for a series of town hall meetings on the status of health care in northwestern Ontario. These sessions were held in Atikokan, Fort Frances, Rainy River, Kenora and Dryden, and they illustrated that the health care model that's being pushed by this government is failing small communities. Whether it's women in Atikokan who are being forced to travel to Thunder Bay for maternity services because the government doesn't want to pay for them to access them at home in Atikokan, or a couple in Kenora who have lived in Ontario for four years but who still have to drive seven hours back to Saskatchewan to get their prescriptions filled, or the mother in Kenora who had to drive to Winnipeg after her newborn was airlifted there following a traumatic birth because she was not allowed to accompany the infant on the airplane, the fact is that our health care is leaving northerners frustrated and scared that the services they need may not be there when they need them the most.

The goal of these meetings was to hear directly from the people who are attempting to access these services. While the experiences differed from town to town, the fact is that something needs to be done, and that was heard loud and clear.

In the coming weeks, we will bring these examples to the Minister of Health in the hopes of seeing real action on these shortcomings. It's my hope that she will work with us and all members of this House to improve access to essential services across the north and across all of Ontario.

ATHLETIC FACILITIES

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Just last Thursday, on September 27, I had the great pleasure of joining our Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, along with my colleague sitting to my left, the MPP for Scarborough–Agincourt, in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East for a very, very special groundbreaking ceremony. Through the support and partnership of all levels of government, we joined the Toronto 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games organizing committee to launch the aquatics centre and field house, the largest investment ever made in the history of Canadian amateur sport. The project will create 150 construction jobs and is the first of five brand new athletic facilities being built in the region for the games.

The University of Toronto Scarborough campus is proud to be the home of the state-of-the-art multi-purpose athletic centre, which will host swimming, diving, synchronized swimming, fencing and portions of modern pentathlon.

I want to congratulate the U of T Scarborough campus principal, Franco Vaccarino, and all of the staff and the

students at the facility for their leadership in making this project a reality.

Following the summer of 2015, the facility will take on a permanent new life, serving university students, my constituents in Pickering-Scarborough East, and indeed all Ontarians, for generations to come.

It was an exciting day for all. This will be a fully accessible venue, which is an important part of what's being constructed. I just want to congratulate everyone who is going to be part of the People's Games. Congratulations to all.

BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to stand today and congratulate the Clarington Orioles Minor Mosquitoes for winning the Eastern Ontario Baseball Association championship.

The Orioles captured the gold medal in Ajax, defeating the top-seeded Ajax team and winning the two-game final against the undefeated Cobourg Cardinals. Congratulations to team members Jacob Weeden, Thomas Aronowicz, Breckin Krummenacher, Cameron Lugtenburg, Landon Bentley, Camden Stickney, Cameron Brown, Tyler McGarvey, Ayden Wood, Nathan McCabe, Ethan Robertson, Cameron Noble and Noah Mitchell. Congratulations also to coaches Jack Bentley, Rob Stickney, Kevin Brown, Andrew Krummenacher and Steve Wood.

It was truly a major-league effort by the Clarington Orioles Minor Mosquito AA baseball team. Congratulations for your hard work and a great season. Keep up the great work, and congratulations to all those involved, especially their parents and families.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kenora-Rainy River has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Natural Resources concerning job cuts resulting from the MNR's transformation plan. This matter will be debated on Tuesday, October 16, at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (TROUBLE DE STRESS POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 129, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post traumatic stress disorder / *Projet de loi 129, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail relativement au trouble de stress post-traumatique.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The bill amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, to provide that a front-line worker, such as a paramedic, police officer or firefighter, who sustains mental stress arising out of and in the course of his or her employment is entitled to benefits under the insurance plan. The bill also specifies that post-traumatic stress disorder is a type of mental stress.

PROMOTING LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR LA PROMOTION DES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Mr. McMeekin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2012 and to amend the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Act with respect to program creation and other matters / *Projet de loi 130, Loi édictant la Loi de 2012 sur les aliments locaux et modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales en ce qui concerne la création de programmes et d'autres questions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

ENHANCING RED LIGHT CAMERA SYSTEM ENFORCEMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 RENFORÇANT LES MESURES D'EXÉCUTION À L'ÉGARD DU SYSTÈME PHOTOGRAPHIQUE RELIÉ AUX FEUX ROUGES

Mr. Naqvi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Provincial Offences Act with respect to red light camera system evidence / *Projet de loi 131, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi sur les infractions provinciales relativement aux preuves obtenues au moyen d'un système photographique relié aux feux rouges.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act with respect to service of offence notices issued in proceedings based on evidence obtained through the use of a red-light camera system. The amendments provide that offence notices may be served by mail to addresses whether in or outside Ontario, and incorporate into the act related rules currently set out in the regulations.

The bill also amends the Provincial Offences Act with respect to proceedings based on evidence obtained through the use of a red-light camera system. The amendments provide that in those proceedings, section 48.1 of the act regarding certified evidence shall apply to a statement respecting ownership of a vehicle certified by a government of a jurisdiction outside Ontario in the same way that it applies to such a statement certified by the Ministry of Transportation.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO PRODUCE

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Before I begin, I just want to acknowledge a few good folk who are here from the Niagara food sector. They are down, many of them, for the Premier's eighth annual agri-food summit and the innovation awards. But I digress.

Let me just introduce some folk here. Jamie Reaume is here. He's active with the Holland Marsh and chair of the Ontario Food Terminal. Welcome, Jamie. Frank Ingratta, former deputy minister, is here. Brian Gilroy from the Ontario Apple Growers is here. Bill George from the Grape Growers of Ontario is here. Mark Wales, president of OFA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, is here, as is Ron Bonnett, the president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

We have Bob Chorney from Farmers' Markets Ontario; Art Smith from the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association; Phil Tregunno from the Ontario Tender Fruit Producers' Marketing Board; Denise Zaborowski from Foodland Ontario; and of course our good friend, a former member and Speaker of the House, the Honourable Steve Peters from the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors. Welcome.

There are some folk from Sustain Ontario here as well, and one other very special guest, my local councillor from Flamborough, who has been a friend to me for a quarter of a century, Rob Pasuta. Rob, welcome.

Mr. Speaker, today—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Today I am pleased to introduce a bill which would enact the Promoting Local Food Act, 2012. Coming up on Thanksgiving, with the fall harvest season now in full swing, I think this is the most opportune time to bring this bill forward.

If passed, the legislation and supporting initiatives would help more people find, buy and eat Ontario-grown, -harvested and -processed food and beverages, the best-tasting, most nutritious and safest food in the world. It would fulfil our commitment to introducing legislation that supports, promotes and celebrates all the good things that grow in Ontario. You all know the song: "Good things grow in Ontario." If every household in Ontario shifted, not spent more but simply shifted, \$10 of their weekly food spending to local food, it would result in a \$2.4-billion boost in sales and create some 10,000 agri-food jobs.

Interjection: That's a lot.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It is a lot.

The local food act, if the bill is passed, would help foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario, increase awareness of the diversity of local food in Ontario, and, of course, encourage the development of new export markets for local food.

Speaker, if passed, the act would also amend other legislation to make the process for establishing local food and other programs more efficient and transparent. I know how much this Legislative Assembly appreciates efficiency and transparency.

We want Ontarians to know that they can eat great local food at home, in restaurants, at work, in schools, in hospitals—in fact, wherever they are. This proposed act, if passed, will allow us to build on an already good awareness. I don't know if you know this, but the Foodland Ontario logo is the second most recognized logo in Ontario: 92% of Ontarians. There's only one, I'm told, that's better known, and that's McDonald's, so we've got a little bit of work to do yet, no slight intended to McDonald's.

Mr. Speaker, we want to use this act to translate to more sales of local food and create greater demand and more food production. We know that food production creates jobs and economic growth.

Of course, in order to succeed, we need to work collaboratively, together. We need to talk. We need to plan. We need to struggle to see what we can do together. This summer, Mr. Speaker, we set that very tone by engaging people all across Ontario, gathering in their ideas on building a stronger food culture, a culture of engagement and collaboration and one that we want to foster.

Going forward, we would work with other ministries, including health and education, with the broader public sector and with industry partners to develop goals in a number of areas: production and processing and the link between the two, distribution, sales, marketing, retailing—

Hon. Michael Chan: And eating.

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Hon. Ted McMeekin: —and eating too, my colleague says. That's the best part, right?

Once we have those goals, we would collaborate on achieving them: sharing knowledge, connections and resources to support the success of our diverse local food economies. It's a matter of connecting the dots and knowing where the dots are in the beginning, to connect them together.

Since 2003, we have accomplished much with our farm, food and community partners. Ontario, in fact, has invested more than \$100 million in local food activities. Foodland Ontario is, of course, a very powerful marketing tool, as I mentioned.

By the way, my figure was wrong. It's recognized by 94% of Ontarians, not 92%. That's what happens when you get a little older and you start losing some of those figures—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Ninety-four is a great number.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —94%.

But there's more to do, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our Premier announced that his upcoming trade mission to China in January 2013 will in fact showcase Ontario both as a great source of quality food products and innovation as well as a prime destination for investment, right here in Ontario.

Hon. Michael Chan: Good stuff. I like that.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It is good stuff.

That's why we are also proposing a number of non-legislative initiatives: a ministers' forum; more education; more support for communities and regions working on local food. We are looking at establishing a local food fund to help with some of these dots that we're connecting.

Speaker, the time is right. We have all the elements of success: willing shoppers, more retail interest than ever, and skilled farmers and processors. Supporting this act and these activities will mean a more robust local food system, more economic activity in rural Ontario and more jobs throughout the province.

SMALL BUSINESS MONTH

Hon. Brad Duguid: I rise today to recognize Small Business Month in Ontario—and I promise my colleagues I'm not going to sing—not even one note. I promise you.

I'd like to start by introducing someone whom most of us around here know: Satinder Chera, vice-president, communications, in Ontario, at the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, right over here in the government gallery. Give him a round of applause. We all know Satinder.

This government has been working very closely with the CFIB to determine how we can better serve the needs of small business. I think that's a non-partisan thing to do. Our relationship is collaborative, and I'm pleased to say that I'm confident that the work we're doing with the

CFIB will make a difference for small and medium-sized businesses and all Ontarians.

I'm pleased to be involved with this. Please allow me to publicly thank Satinder and his group for his leadership on behalf of Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses.

I ask all sides of this House to join me today in celebrating the contributions that small businesses make to our economy and to our quality of life. These businesses are at the heart of Ontario's economy. Some 97% of Ontario employers have fewer than 100 people on their payroll. More than one third of Canada's small and medium-sized businesses are located right here in Ontario.

Small businesses make an impact in more ways than just numbers. Small businesses give many of our young people their all-important first experience in the workplace. They also expose young people to a career option that they might not be aware of: the option of being their own boss—and we need that. We need more of that.

Today, Ontario is competing with the world to attract the best and the brightest, to create globally competitive companies and to compete and win in the global economy. We need more Ontarians who are willing to be entrepreneurs, small business owners; people who want to not simply find a job but create jobs.

We've been working hard to ensure that the economic conditions here in Ontario foster growth and help small businesses thrive. We provide services across the province where entrepreneurs can get the help they need, everything from writing a business plan to developing an export strategy. The dedicated business consultants in our 57 small business enterprise centres provide support to small business owners and entrepreneurs, helping thousands of Ontarians every year.

I'm proud of the efforts our government has taken to partner with small businesses in order to find ways to reduce red tape and reduce taxes on businesses and consumers. We've cut over 80,000 regulatory burdens that were no longer necessary. That's a 70%—17%; I wish it were 70%—but it's a 17% reduction since we started in 2008.

Ontario's reforms have reduced taxes for Ontario businesses by over \$8 billion a year. That's one reason that Site Selection magazine has ranked Ontario the most competitive province in Canada for three straight years.

We know we can never stop looking for new ways to help small business owners succeed and excel in their endeavours. That's why we're working with the CFIB to identify and address the outstanding challenges facing small businesses that have not yet been addressed through our Open for Business initiative.

Earlier this year, in partnership with the CFIB, we held a number of round tables with small business owners. I found that experience to be invaluable in helping me understand the priorities of small businesses in Ontario and how we can address those priorities through our Open for Business initiative to create faster, smarter and streamlined government-to-business services.

CFIB has recognized our efforts to cut red tape and improve government-to-business services for small business. This year, Ontario moved up a full grade in their red tape report card. This was the most significant improvement in Canada, and we're very proud of that.

We also want to support the next generation of entrepreneurs to help them realize their dreams. That's why we look at ways to serve entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs even better, to make sure people have easy access to the best business advice wherever they are and whenever they need it.

Mr. Speaker, several events will take place this month in support of small businesses. Ontario's small business enterprise centres will be holding more than 20 Bridges to Better Business conferences in communities across the province. Our province will be collaborating with the federal government on National Small Business Week events being held across Ontario between October 14 and October 20. The CFIB will be holding Small Business Saturday on October 20, and later this month, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce will recognize the accomplishments of leading companies across Ontario, including small and medium-sized businesses, with the Ontario Business Achievement Awards.

Ontario is proud to be an integral part of all these events. While I mentioned the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, let me also thank and commend them for administering our Export Market Access Program, which helps small and medium-sized companies become export-ready and bring their products and services on to international markets.

Mr. Speaker, more than half of all Ontarians working for a business work for a small or medium-sized business. This October, let's recognize, celebrate and support Ontario's small businesses and Ontario's entrepreneurs, whose energy, drive and innovation will help Ontario become a global economic leader.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? Responses?

ONTARIO PRODUCE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I, too, want to welcome all the guests in the audience who are here today for the introduction of these two pieces of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I was expecting that a local food act would lay out a strategy to strengthen our agriculture industry and make a difference in the availability of local food, but that's not what this bill does. This bill addresses only one small part. It could have been accomplished by simply passing a previous NDP bill or, frankly, by the Premier giving directions to the ministries.

The people of Ontario are increasingly aware of the importance of local food. I commend people who are making the effort to buy local food and support our farmers. Unfortunately, this government doesn't understand that in order to support local food, you need to support the local farmers. The PC caucus gets that.

This summer we launched a province-wide survey of Ontario farmers. We asked them what challenges they are facing, what the government priorities should be to strengthen agriculture and what the government can do to increase local food. What we heard was that this government's policies are part of the problem. We heard about red tape, taxes, increasing hydro costs and that the programs are too complicated.

Seventy-seven percent of survey respondents said red tape on Ontario farms is increasing. Farmers now spend the equivalent of four weeks a year just dealing with government forms and paperwork. For this bill to truly support farmers and local food, it needs to address this problem.

This government has not made farmers or agriculture a priority. They capped the Risk Management Program at \$100 million and then spent more than six times that amount, \$650 million, in a political decision to relocate two power plants.

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When asked about the biggest challenge farmers are facing, they responded, "regulations," "hydro costs," and "rising input costs." When we asked farmers the most important thing that the government could do to ensure the availability of local food, they said, "Government should work with farmers instead of simply enforcing more and more red tape without any accountability."

"Don't put wind turbines on good agricultural land": another quote.

We heard, "We need more local abattoirs. Government regulations are killing the local meat-packing industry."

If you support local food, those are all issues that need to be addressed, Minister.

As we celebrate Agriculture Week and Thanksgiving, I ask everyone to support our farmers by buying great local Ontario food, and by telling this government we need a real local food act to address these challenges so we can continue to have that great Ontario food that the minister was trying to sing about, Mr. Speaker—just trying.

SMALL BUSINESS MONTH

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise in the House today in recognition of Small Business Month. As members of this House know, I come from a small business background—and a proud member of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Our family business began in 1948 as an auto, farm and general hardware store. Over the years, the family business developed into a Home Hardware Building Centre, auto and farm supply store, Rogers and LCBO agency store. I'm proud to say that we now employ 65 people in the village of Newbury. I've watched my parents, Gary and Susan McNaughton, work day in and day out, often making significant financial and personal sacrifices to ensure that the family business continued to grow.

This story is one that can be heard right across this province. There are many examples of great men and women who have worked tirelessly to grow their business and contribute to Ontario's economy.

Tim Hudak, the entire PC caucus and myself are committed to making Ontario the best place to own and operate a small business. We are working to help make energy prices affordable for small businesses, to cut red tape and to get the books back to balance in this province. Our mission is to make it easier to start, grow and expand a business here in Ontario. The PC caucus is committed to doing this because we understand the value that small businesses bring to Ontario's economy, and we are committed to supporting and encouraging that.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the hard-working men and women who work tirelessly to drive Ontario's economy forward through their commitment to small businesses.

SMALL BUSINESS MONTH

Ms. Catherine Fife: This morning, I was pleased to attend the launch of a new company, Hyphen, in Kitchener–Waterloo. Hyphen is a division of Christie Digital. Hyphen will address the local need for superior, faster and more conveniently located prototyping and environmental testing services, all under one roof. It's really quite an amazing company. Like many companies in Kitchener–Waterloo, for Christie, innovation is key to their success, and Hyphen is continuing that tradition in combination with a strong trend towards research and development.

The conversation in this province of how companies like Christie Digital and Hyphen can continue to grow and prosper is ongoing, and I know the minister would share my belief that research and development and supporting start-ups is key to improving productivity and thus creating jobs.

The tag line for Hyphen is "Build-Test-Optimize." It's a great tag line for a company, but quite honestly, it's a good tag line for a strong economic and job creation strategy for the province of Ontario. Of course, we need more than a quick tag line to foster job growth.

That said, we do know how to build conditions for economic growth by offering tax credits for those companies that create real jobs and by fostering learning through a training credit. Reducing the corporate tax rate for small businesses to 2% from 4.5%, as proposed by the NDP in the last budget, would also be helpful.

We have some tested models for growth, like our job creator tax credit, which would focus tax dollars strategically at those companies that create jobs. This idea has been forwarded to the Premier's Jobs and Prosperity Council, and we strongly believe it is deserving of the government's support.

Finally, we can and we should optimize our potential by supporting entrepreneurs. In a recent op-ed by Iain Klugman in the Financial Post, "Start-up Funding Crucial To Future Innovation," Mr. Klugman rightly points out

that we should be looking chiefly to our entrepreneurs to commercialize new ideas and innovations. Governments can and should foster this spirit so that more companies like Hyphen can expand, grow and hire.

ONTARIO PRODUCE

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, it is once again an honour to stand in this place and speak on behalf of the New Democratic caucus in response to the Minister of Agriculture regarding the local food act. The time is very appropriate: during Agriculture Week in Ontario and just before Thanksgiving, when families celebrate their blessings and farmers celebrate the harvest—hopefully partly completed and hopefully better than anticipated.

Everyone should also be thankful for what the agricultural sector does for Ontario: 700,000 jobs and over \$30 billion in economic activity. The NDP is solidly behind the concept of Ontarians having access and enjoyment of more local food. In fact, our leader, Andrea Horwath, introduced a private member's bill to that effect in September 2010.

Who would not be in favour of more local food? But as always, Speaker, the devil is in the details. The people in Timiskaming know a lot about the importance of local food to the economy. The Little Clay Belt is a fertile valley dotted with productive dairy farms. We had one cheese factory in our area. When its owner announced its closure, the local community banded together, led by a group of farmers, and, with the help of Dairy Farmers of Ontario and East Gen, we saved the plant. It was a long, hard fight, and now, years later, we can say with confidence that Thornloe Cheese is here to stay.

But we learned something in the process: People are not eating more cheese because they buy ours; they could be eating less of someone else's cheese. So the government's sales pitch that a \$10-per-week shift to local food per family will increase economic activity by 10,000 jobs, while great public relations—great—is somewhat suspect. Unless Ontarians are going to eat more food, the \$10 could be displaced from one supplier to another. So we are not increasing overall economic activity unless you are displacing imports, and even then there are people in Ontario who make their living importing food.

The New Democratic Party is hoping that the government will take this opportunity to work with us and to pass substantive legislation that will truly increase the consumption of local food and further strengthen the agricultural sector. If you ate today, thank a farmer, a processor, a retailer, and please don't forget the cook.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order for the chief government whip.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I do rise on a point of order to handle something we should have handled a little earlier today. I seek unanimous consent to revert back to motions at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The chief government whip is seeking unanimous consent to move back into motions. Agreed? Agreed.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Brad Duguid: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion. Agreed? Agreed.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice of ballot item 69 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: My constituents from the riding of Durham present the following petition. I want to thank the constituents: Frank Agueci, Robert McJannett, Rob Purdy and Peter Barber. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and
1350

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

I'm pleased to sign, support this and present it to Parnika.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Miss Monique Taylor: I am happy to rise once again to read more of these petitions to the House.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, is not allowed to provide trusted,

independent investigations of complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not allowing their Ombudsman to investigate complaints against children's aid societies; and

"Whereas people who feel they have been wronged by the actions of children's aid societies are left feeling helpless with nowhere else to turn for help to correct systemic issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to grant the Ombudsman the power to investigate children's aid societies."

I couldn't agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I will sign my name to this petition and give it to page Simran to deliver to the Clerk.

WIRELESS SERVICE AGREEMENTS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas more than two thirds of Ontarians have a wireless service agreement;

"Whereas the majority of cellphone contracts are postpaid, often causing consumers surprise when they are charged for services they did not agree to or they did not know would result in added costs;

"Whereas consumers would benefit from clear and easy-to-understand language that describes the real costs and terms of wireless service agreements for cellphones, smart phones and other mobile devices;

"Whereas it is the responsibility of businesses to make sure their customers know what services they are paying for;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 82, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012 be adopted to make it easier for consumers to understand the costs and terms of wireless services agreements while ensuring service providers are upfront with information before contracts are signed."

I endorse this petition and send it to the table via page Maya.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government is forcing Ontario municipalities to build industrial wind turbines without any local say or local approval; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government transferred decision-making power from elected municipal governments to unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor

General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus has committed to restore local decision-making powers and to building renewable energy projects only in places where they are welcomed, wanted and at prices Ontario families can afford;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government restore local decision-making powers for renewable energy projects and immediately stop forcing new industrial wind developments on municipalities that have not approved them and whose citizens do not want them in their community."

I support this petition and send it with page Simran.

UTILITY TRANSPORTATION VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATV) is legal on schedule 2 highways in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas many residents of Ontario have switched to utility transportation vehicles (UTV); and

"Whereas the use of UTVs in schedule C of the Highway Traffic Act is allowed north of areas in far northern Ontario and unorganized territory....

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario direct the Ministry of Transportation to enact legislation to allow the use of UTVs on class 2 highways throughout northern Ontario."

I fully agree, sign it and give it to page Zakhar.

FAMILY SAFETY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I have a petition today.

"Safer Families program in Peel region:

"Whereas the Safer Families program is a successful partnership of Catholic Family Services Peel Dufferin, Family Services of Peel, and the Peel Children's Aid Society (CAS), receives year-to-year funding from the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and is a critical component of social services to families within the Peel community; and

"Whereas the intervention model for Safer Families currently operates with no waiting lists, an important consideration for families experiencing domestic violence and child protection concerns, as they require immediate access to service; and

"Whereas the Safer Families program is aligned with Ontario's child poverty agenda, is committed to preventing violence against women, and contributes to community capacity building to support child welfare delivery; and

"Whereas currently, Safer Families serves 14% of all domestic violence cases referred to Peel Children's Aid

Society, and has the ability to double the number of cases it handles with proper funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario adjust its funding to supply ongoing core funding rather than year-to-year funding, and realign funding to double the percentage of cases referred by the Peel Children's Aid Society and served by the Safer Families program."

I support this petition wholeheartedly, and I sign here and give it to page Patrick.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario halted construction and cancelled the project to build an electrical generation station in Mississauga in the autumn of 2011, during an election period, after construction was under way; and

"Whereas Minister of Energy Chris Bentley has stated publicly that the Ontario Liberal Party campaign team made the decision to halt construction and cancel the project to help win the seats of five existing Liberal Party members of the Legislature, including seats in Oakville, Mississauga and Etobicoke; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario also arbitrarily cancelled a project to build a natural gas power plant in Oakville in 2010 to save a Liberal seat; and

"Whereas initial reports indicate that the cancellation of both the Mississauga and Oakville power plants will cost Ontario taxpayers at least \$640 million; and

"Whereas the Minister of Energy deliberately hid and continues to withhold documents detailing these costs from Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as tax- and ratepayers of Ontario, to immediately reconstitute the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and refer the matter of the Ministry of Energy's withholding of documents relating to the Mississauga and Oakville power plants to the committee for extensive review and further investigation."

I obviously support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Katherine to take to the table.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

I couldn't agree more. On behalf of the thousand or more dogs killed because of the way they look, I'm going to sign it and I'm going to give it to Ethan. He's going to deliver it to the table. Thank you.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from the York South–Weston community and residents.

"Whereas there have been several incidents of violence and crime related to the illegal sale and service of alcohol in our community; and

"Whereas we, as a community, want safety and peace of mind and know that giving law enforcement better tools to combat criminal actions will help meet this goal;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 93, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act (Serving Liquor in Certain Places), 2012 into law."

I agree with this petition, and I will hand it over to page Caius—I hope I pronounced that right—and I will sign it.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt;

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and Oak Ridges moraine;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries;

1400

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt."

I've affixed my signature, as I agree, and given it to page Jacqueline.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the good people of Nickel Belt and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government has made ... (PET) scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under" certain "conditions...; and

"Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to" the people of the northeast.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Simran to bring it to the Clerk.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all Ontarians have the right to a safe home environment;

"Whereas the government of Ontario works to reduce all barriers in place that prevent victims of domestic violence from fleeing abusive situations;

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act does not take into consideration the special circumstances facing a tenant who is suffering from abuse;

"Whereas those that live in fear for their personal safety and that of their children should not be financially penalized for the early termination of their residential leases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 22, the Escaping Domestic Violence Act, 2011, be adopted so that victims of domestic violence be afforded a mechanism for the early termination of their lease to allow them to leave an abusive relationship and find a safe place for themselves and their children to call home."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature and send it to the table via page Sashin.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to uphold the decision of the consolidated hearings board for Duntroon quarry:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Office of Consolidated Hearings, a panel made up of two members of the Ontario Municipal Board and a vice-chair of the Environmental Review Tribunal, heard evidence for 139 days over the course of

39 weeks, where they heard from 36 experts, seven lay witnesses and numerous participants; and

"Whereas the evidence at the hearings made it overwhelmingly clear that the proposed Duntroon quarry would create ... over 150 indirect jobs and contribute significantly to the local economy; and

"Whereas the proposal has been studied for nine years and represents the continuation of a long-established land use in the area, where an existing quarry has been operating for over 40 years without significant negative impacts; and

"Whereas Walker Industries has entered into agreements with Clearview township and the county of Simcoe to provide substantial benefits to the municipalities that are above and beyond those required by the Aggregate Resources Act, the Planning Act and the Municipal Act; and

"Whereas the haul route along Simcoe County Road 91 has been used for this purpose for more than 40 years, steps have been taken to minimize environmental impacts, and there has been no opposition from the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the county of Simcoe or Clearview township;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government respect the decision made by the Office of Consolidated Hearings and allow the Duntroon quarry to move forward so that our environment can be protected and good jobs can be maintained and created for local families in need of work."

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Katherine to bring it to the clerks' table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

FIRST RESPONDERS DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DES PREMIERS INTERVENANTS

Mr. Klees moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 123, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day /
Projet de loi 123, Loi proclamant le Jour des premiers intervenants.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Klees has moved second reading of Bill 123, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I'll correct you: For the record, it's Bill 123.

It's an honour for me to bring the First Responders Day Act forward for consideration. If this bill passes second reading today, I hope we would all agree that we will bring it to third reading quickly and that it will receive royal assent in time for us to celebrate First Responders Day on May 1 of the coming year and every May 1 thereafter.

In the course of discussing my reasons for dedicating my private member's bill to the first responders of this province, I will be recognizing the many special guests who have joined us today to observe this debate. Every member of this Legislature and members of the press gallery received a copy of this book, entitled 911: True Tales of Courage and Compassion. I want to welcome the author, Vali Stone, who, along with her family and friends, is joining us in the members' west gallery. Welcome, and thank you for the key role that you've played in bringing the First Responders Day Act to the floor of this Legislature.

Joining Ms. Stone from the East Gwillimbury fire department are Fire Chief Ken Beckett and Deputy Fire Chief Phil Dawson.

For those who have read 911, you will know that Chief Beckett is one of those first responders who was willing to share some of his most memorable experiences on behalf of us all. I want to thank him for doing that. Perhaps more so than any other account in this book, Chief Beckett's description of a call to which he responded on March 8, 1997, impressed on me the extent to which first responders in our communities are exposed to human suffering and are called upon to put the lives of others first, and must constantly struggle with subordinating their own personal feelings in the face of the tragedy they have just encountered.

Here is how Chief Beckett described that call:

"It was 10:30 a.m. on Mount Albert Road. The centre median was covered with heavy, wet slush from the previous night's snowfall. A driver got sucked into a dense rut and came across the road, hitting my daughter-in-law Cathy's car. My son Tim, a firefighter at the same station, was off that day, helping his brother-in-law

move, and my daughter was on her way to our house to bring us our two grandsons, Brian, aged 2, and Kevin, aged 5, for my wife to babysit while Cathy went to work.

"My pager went off, and I was debating whether I should attend with the rest of the crew when I received a phone call from a friend of mine suggesting that I should respond as there had been a serious accident and he believed that my daughter-in-law was involved.

"There are no words to describe the fear that grips one's heart when it comes to a family call."

Speaker, Chief Beckett goes on to describe how the children were airlifted to Sick Children's Hospital. Both were in a coma. Two-year-old Brian tragically succumbed to his injuries. His brother would eventually survive. He describes how one of the most difficult challenges in the job is dealing with a death, and especially a death that involves a family member or a friend.

Chief Beckett, we want to thank you for sharing that very personal experience with us, and through you, we also want to express our sincere appreciation to the men and women who put themselves in harm's way every day to carry out their professional calling as first responders.

Also joining us today is Fire Chief John Lynn from the city of Barrie. I want to acknowledge Fire Chief Jeff McCormick from the Brantford Fire Department, and from the Goderich Fire Department, we welcome firefighter Dale Baechler.

Speaker, today we have an opportunity to honour the men and women who are serving on our front lines as emergency responders in our province every day, by passing a bill that will set aside a special day of recognition for all first responders.

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Also in the members' gallery, from the York Regional Police Services, I'm pleased to welcome Inspector Angelo De Lorenzi and constable Ken Golding. From the Toronto Police Services, we welcome Acting Deputy Chief Tom Russell, tactical training constable Derrick Goobie, and police officer Brent Pilkey. They're joined by Mr. David McFadden, the president of the Police Association of Ontario.

We know all too well that the men and women of our police services never know what their day will bring. We can't begin to imagine the emotions of their families every day, wondering what will happen and whether their spouse or their father will return home safely.

In his contribution to the 911 book, Josip Susic, a constable with the York Regional Police Service, put it this way: "As police officers, we are always putting our lives on the line for the sake of public safety. I do not consider my life as important as that of my partner or civilians. It could be my military background, but even if I get injured or lose my life, I know I did it because it was my choice to take this job. For me, it's more important to save someone, even if it means that I might never make it home."

Constable Susic's comments are not empty words. These men and women risk their lives to protect ours on a daily basis, and we cannot take that for granted. But we

don't just want to wait to express our gratitude at a memorial. That's why we have before us this bill that will designate every May 1 as First Responders Day.

The intention is that whether it's through statements here in this Legislature, or recognitions in municipal offices across the province, or tributes in school auditoriums, we would take the time every May 1 to acknowledge that our communities are safe, our homes are protected and our lives are secure because of the dedication of the first responders in our province.

I want to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Paul Charbonneau, past president of the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs; and from the Toronto Paramedic Association, president Geoff MacBride and paramedics Don Meikle and Judy Belanger. Again, I want to thank Judy for her insight into the world of paramedics through her contribution in this book.

I also want to thank Ken Horton, from the Toronto EMS, and his colleagues who are here today. I want to thank you for your expression of support for this bill.

To underscore the impact of paramedics in our lives, here is a letter that was sent to Ornge, our province's air ambulance service, this past summer from the mother of a two-year-old boy. I want to read it into the record in support of the front-line paramedics, pilots and dispatchers at Ornge and in celebration of the work that they do. The letter reads as follows:

"I would ask that you pass along this message to the Ornge team (including Dennis and Dan) who airlifted our son to SickKids in July.

"Our son Brendan was brought into the hospital about 8:30 a.m. by ambulance after a near-drowning incident at our family camp. He was stabilized by the ER team and then airlifted to SickKids by Ornge paramedics Dennis and Dan.

"I wanted to let Dennis and Dan (and the pilots—didn't catch their names) know that Brendan was discharged on Sunday and we are now at home. He is back to his wonderful self, laughing and smiling and up to two-year-old antics. He is truly a miracle. As per MRI and neurology, no brain injury is suspected.

"I remember being so amazed by the professionalism and competence of our Ornge team. I couldn't have asked for better people to literally have our son's life in their hands. We credit his amazing recovery to the top-notch care he received at all stages of this ordeal. We have our little boy back, because of you."

Speaker, there are stories like these every day that go unnoticed and unrecognized. We want to thank and honour the paramedics, the pilots, the dispatchers at Ornge, the paramedics right across this province, who carry out their duty every day on our behalf. It is because of them that we have the security that we do.

I also want to acknowledge Mr. John Saunders, the president of the International Association of Emergency Managers. In fact, it's Mr. Saunders who is responsible for the term "emergency managers" being included in the definition of first responders in this bill. I also want to thank him for affirming that May 1 is in fact an appro-

priate designated day in this province, and the reason is that the first week in May is national Emergency Preparedness Week. Mr. Saunders is joined by the president of the Ontario Association of Emergency Managers, Mr. Rob McDonald.

I also want to thank Denise Stone, the community emergency management coordinator for the region of Niagara, for joining us today.

A special welcome to Councillor Jim Foubister from the city of Sarnia.

Last but not least, I want to acknowledge, from my hometown of Aurora, our manager of special projects, Mr. Jim Kyle; and, representing York region's St. John Ambulance and the many volunteers of that great organization across the province, Russell Walter.

A few weeks ago, I found this book on my desk. I opened it up. Inside was a note that said, "Frank: Thought you would like to review this before I call on Friday in regards to the private bill for first responders. Thank you, Vali Stone." I read the book, and after reading the book, I realized that we have a responsibility in this province to honour and recognize the men and women who have dedicated their lives to serving us on the front lines in the various capacities of first responders.

There are some 34 accounts of first responders in this book who have given us an insight into what their day is like. I highly recommend that we all read it. I highly recommend to the public that they do, because I believe they will see in a very different light the work that the first responders do in this province. These are ordinary people who carry out extraordinary feats every day. They deserve to be honoured by having this bill passed today so that every year on May 1 we would take the time to recognize the incredible work that these amazing people within our communities carry out for us selflessly every day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my honour to rise in support of this bill. In fact, all of us in the New Democratic Party, including our leader, Andrea Horwath, are in support of this bill. I rise only for a minute or two, because my colleagues will be taking time as well, just to thank those who have come down to celebrate this day that this bill is tabled and will hopefully pass, and to bring your attention to the third time a bill of ours has been tabled as well. That is to provide presumed diagnosis for post-traumatic stress disorder for front-line responders, which is something that we have been working on, a third time tabling.

This bill is modeled on a bill introduced by our leader, Andrea Horwath, where it was presumed diagnosis for certain kinds of cancers for firefighters coming out of the Plastimet fire. That was the inspiration for that. That bill was taken up by the government and introduced, and I would urge my colleagues across the aisle to do the same with the member from Newmarket-Aurora's bill, and ultimately the same with our post-traumatic stress dis-

order as a presumed diagnosis for front-line responders too.

Certainly in my constituency office we've had a number of paramedics and others bring to light some incredibly tragic cases, moments when they risked their lives. Some recovered and, unfortunately, some did not. My husband was a police officer for a while after high school in Waterloo region and experienced first-hand what it was to be a police officer and to go into situations of danger. He's never forgotten it. He went on to university wanting to become a detective and ended up teaching college—an only slightly safer job, I must say. But certainly wherever front-line responders are mentioned, my husband is there to defend them and the work that they do because he knows what it looks like.

So to all of you, we thank you on behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, for the work that you do. We celebrate the member from Newmarket-Aurora in this initiative and we hope to extend that initiative so you are better protected. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

1420

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It is my pleasure to rise and speak in support of this very important bill before us, to proclaim May 1 of each year as First Responders Day.

I'm very happy to support this, and I, too, want to thank everyone who's here today and everyone who is not here today from the first responders community. I know it includes many people: police, firefighters, military personnel—we often forget about those folks, and we shouldn't—paramedics, medical evacuation pilots, dispatchers, nurses, doctors and emergency medical technicians.

For me, Speaker, I know first-hand of the good work these folks do in my community in Pickering-Scarborough East. As many members here know, I come from a long line of firefighters. My father was a firefighter in Toronto at the Yorkville station here. My two uncles were firefighters as well. So as a young girl, I heard many stories about the very brave work that they and their colleagues did.

In terms of the bill itself, as I said, I'm just absolutely thrilled to support it. We want to make sure that we recognize all of our first responders, all over Ontario, when they respond to emergencies, and this is a great way to do that. Our government continues to work with all the sectors to ensure that all our first responders have the tools that they need to continue their good work.

In terms of the day itself, I just want to acknowledge—and I think because of the good work of many members in this Legislature, we have a number of other days designated to May 1. We just want to make sure that, when we move forward with May 1 for this bill—we want to flag that there are other days, such as Emergency Preparedness Week and National Police Week and so on—all very important things, but we want to make sure that if events are organized, the events don't

coincide and that we do indeed celebrate the important work of first responders here.

Some other first responders who may be considered under the act—perhaps this could be clarified as we go forward—are correctional officers, sergeants, OSPCA investigators and 911 operators. It may be, Speaker, that 911 operators are already captured under the term of “dispatchers” under this bill, but I just offer that as a potential suggestion and consideration as we finalize this going forward.

So, again, I’m just absolutely thrilled to speak on behalf of this bill. I once again thank all the first responders who are here today and those who are no longer with us as well. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I’m pleased to support my colleague Frank Klees on Bill 123 for First Responders Day in Ontario.

For someone who does a lot of talking in this House, it has got to be the shortest piece of legislation I’ve ever seen. It’s a total of 11 words, and they probably have more impact than a lot of the things we’ve been debating here in the last two or three weeks.

I can tell you that I fully support this. I wanted to bring my personal experience, after having a fire last May 8 at my home, and the reaction I got working with all of the first responders in my community. I’d been critic for community safety and correctional services for eight years prior to that and have worked a lot with police and fire, but until something actually happens to you, until you actually have, for example, a fire, you really can’t visualize it.

My colleagues have teased me, but I went home from here. I had been up since 4:30 in the morning. I went home and I was having a little snooze—

Laughter.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I was, because I had four events that night. I often do that in the day; I have a quick snooze. I laid down for just a few seconds. My wife had just left the house. I heard all of a sudden the smoke alarms going off in our house, and I’m thinking—first of all, I thought it was some new noise coming out of my BlackBerry. I’ve got to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, I actually went down—and to all my friends here, I couldn’t believe it when I went into my basement and I actually saw my home on fire. You just do not think it can happen to you. My initial reaction was, I was panicking so hard. I honestly couldn’t remember whether it was 911 or 411 to call. I was so excited and so—there’s just no time. There is no time. Those fires spread rapidly. You couldn’t run out and get a bucket of water or something and think you’re going to go back in and douse it. This thing was wide open. The firefighters told me after that fires today are so much faster than they would have been in a home, say, 40 years ago. They’re like 20 times faster because of the chemicals in our homes.

So we called the fire department quickly—and, by the way, Mr. Speaker, it seems like one of the longest waits

you could ever imagine, waiting for those trucks to come. In fact, the reality is, it was only a couple of minutes. It’s a volunteer fire department where I live. They were phenomenal, and they had the support of all four halls. The first came from the Coldwater station—Chief Lynn from Barrie lives near the Coldwater station; he would know that. They came, followed immediately by the two paramedics, and the OPP arrived just a minute or two later. It was amazing to see how the whole organization worked.

Now, I’m a pretty high-strung person, as a lot of people would probably imagine, and I really wanted to get my hands on that fire hose and put the fire out myself. Of course, the first thing they do is say, “You’re going to have a heart attack if you don’t stop it right now. Sit down. We’ll look after it.” Ladies and gentlemen, I couldn’t believe how organized everyone was and how it fell into place. People were calm and cool. They came and asked me, “Where do you think the fire is?” I said, “It’s right below that door that you’re looking at right there,” and in no time the whole gang was there. They were in the house and they had the fire out, and I’ll thank them forever for that.

Sometimes you hear people say, “Let it burn to the ground.” You know what? That’s the worst thing that could have happened, because then you have all kinds of problems with your insurance. This house had all kinds of smoke damage, and it was very easy for the insurance adjusters to go in and do an inventory of what we had, because not a lot got burned; it was all right there. But I thank them.

The police were there. I said to the officer, “Well, why are you here?” I wasn’t sure how it actually worked. He said, “Well, in case there’s another body in the house or something like that, we’ve got to be here to investigate it.” Then I asked the two ladies who were paramedics, “Why are you here?” They said, “In case you get sick now because of this.” But you know what? It was amazing.

I want to thank all the people, like Glenn Higgins from the Orillia Professional Fire Fighters Association—it was an off-day, but he heard about it and he came out—and Mike Gagnon from the Midland Professional Firefighters Association. I got a call from Fred Leblanc from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and Kevin White from the Barrie firefighters. It was just amazing how this network of people worked.

I particularly want to thank our own volunteer fire department in the township of Severn. We have some full-time people, but Chief Eric Dowell and Deputy Chief Cranney—and one special lady who came to the fire was a lady who, just the very night before, was in a fancy evening gown and I was getting my picture taken with her at the Women of Distinction Awards, Debbie Sammit, who owns a business called Pretty Woman Fitness. She was one of the first ones into the house putting out the fire, and it was amazing. She’s a volunteer firefighter as well, of course. It was really, really amazing to watch this whole team of people work.

I don’t think a lot of us understand what we’ve got in our communities. You know, you see those trucks going

by. Somebody else's house is on fire or somebody else has had an accident. But when it's your home and you've actually seen this whole organization come in to work and how they work together, the training they do, the comradeship between each other, it's really and truly a great thing to see, to know that we have that in our communities right across our province.

Member from Newmarket—Aurora, I think it's a phenomenal bill. It ties in nicely with what we expect. It's good to see that all three parties are agreeing on this. Hey, let's not fool around with this. Let's get this thing passed, okay? Let's make sure that next May 1, whether there's an election on or whether we're back here debating everything at the time, we do something really positive for our first responders. That's all the fire departments, the paramedics, the volunteers, everyone in our communities who helps work on first response. Let's give them something really positive at that time and pass this bill.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you appreciated my story here because, I've got to tell you, until you've lived something like a fire, you just won't believe it. I've told this story to many people, and I also want to say, as I close here, that the fire departments have been amazing to talk to. In comments I've made and interviews I've done—I've done some TV interviews as well, promoting smoke alarms, smoke detectors, emergency preparedness. It's really—

Interjection: Sprinklers.

1430

Mr. Garfield Dunlop:—sprinklers, the carbon monoxide bill—these are all very important pieces of legislation.

They're not down here lobbying for the good of their health; these are things that will help save lives. That's why, when we tell our stories and we allow people to come for their opportunities to lobby here, we should be listening to these types of people in particular, because it does save lives.

Thank you for the opportunity, and let's hope we can get this bill passed, okay?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise today as our party's critic for community safety.

Before I begin, I'd like to give a quick shout-out to the first responders in Windsor and Essex county, who do such a great job for our community, keeping us safe. Often, as I'm driving around Essex county, I'll pop into a fire hall. The folks there are so gracious with me as I check out their new rigging and jump on the truck and play with all those cool tools that they have.

They really do provide an essential service, of course. We know they are quite literally lifesavers in our community. It goes without saying that the service that they provide is invaluable. We ask them, each and every day, to put the public's health and safety above their own. We

ask them to put their lives and their bodies on the line, risking personal injury and sometimes death.

We also ask them to bear witness, day in and day out, to personal strife and to tragedy that many of us here in this House could never imagine. That certainly makes them unique in our communities, unique in our province, in the role that they play. But it also makes them vulnerable to post-traumatic stress disorder, something that we know is more common, and more commonly identified as well, and something that today you've heard my colleague from Parkdale—High Park announce as a third attempt to initiate that type of coverage as presumptive legislation under the WSIB.

We hold our first responders to a higher standard, and we ask them to perform at their peak in the highest-of-stress situations. So this day certainly will serve as a reminder for us to pay tribute to the work and the service that they do, but there is much more work that needs to be done. My colleague Paul Miller has initiated several attempts to ensure that there are sprinklers in long-term-care and retirement homes. That's an issue supported by firefighters. We also know that paramedics suffer some of the highest incidences of workplace violence. It is certainly an issue that needs to be addressed.

Also, as we honour you on any given day but certainly on May 1, let us remember that you are essential services, and you are prohibited, under certain parameters, from removing your labour. Let us ensure that you are compensated under those parameters and not taken advantage of because we ask you to perform those services whether you can or cannot. It is the pledge that I give you, as a New Democrat, as the critic for corrections and community safety, that I value the work that you do and that we should not only honour you each and every day but ensure that you have fairness in your workplaces; health and safety legislation that continues to keep you safe; and the tools and resources to help all of us in this province remain safe.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. I rise today to speak in support of Bill 123, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day.

Before I speak to the bill, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge and salute all of the first responders who are here in the Legislature. We are honoured to have you here, and thank you so much for taking the time to come to our Legislature.

Coming to the bill itself, its goal is very laudable and straightforward: to proclaim May 1 of each year as First Responders Day. This includes police officers, firefighters, military personnel, paramedics, medical evacuation pilots, dispatchers, nurses, doctors and emergency medical technicians.

My colleague from Pickering—Scarborough East already alluded to this, but I'd like to add my voice as well, to say that perhaps we should consider including correctional officers and sergeants. Also, I seek clarification as to whether the 911 operators are already captured under "dispatchers."

Earlier, a member was speaking about his personal experience with a fire emergency. I agree with him that unless you yourself experience an emergency, you don't really ever appreciate to the fullest extent the services that these great folks provide us.

Personally, I do remember one night a couple of years ago: It was around 11:00 at night, and I was ready to turn into bed when the alarms in my house started to go off. I was very nervous. I thought there was an intruder somewhere in my backyard and I was calling 911 desperately. I can tell you, my heart was pounding. I can still remember that. As I speak about it, my heart is pounding, because it was definitely a very, very scary time for me, and I can almost feel the relief I felt when those boots came up to the door and said, "Are you okay, ma'am?" Thank you so much to the good folks at Peel police for that personal service that I still remember.

I want to take a moment to just put this into perspective, because there's very, very few of us who can ever claim that we helped save a life, but right here are these men and women who can claim saving not one life but several lives, and how do you put a price on that? How do we as a society ever begin to thank them? Thank you so much. Words are inadequate. Something like this is overdue.

Lastly, I'd also like to take a moment to recognize first responders of a different kind: ordinary men and women who sometimes, in an emergency, without any training, throw caution to the wind and jump in to help a neighbour or a stranger in danger.

Again, I reiterate my support for this overdue formal recognition for the men and women who, every single day, put their lives on the line so that the rest of us are safe.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I am pleased to speak today in support of Bill 123, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day, tabled by my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

First responders risk their lives in order to protect our lives. Establishing May 1 as First Responders Day would give us the opportunity to reflect on the vital role of our first responders. Whether it is a police officer, a paramedic, a nurse, a member of our armed forces, a firefighter or many of the other professionals who serve us, we need to acknowledge the contributions they make to keep us safe.

I think of the tragic events of September 11, 2001. As thousands ran from the towers, the first responders were running in. Bill 123 is not only important on a province-wide level, but it is also important to me on a personal level. My son and my daughter-in-law are proud members of the Guelph Police Service. Another one of my sons is a volunteer firefighter for the North Perth Fire Service. I know how they have dedicated themselves to public service and I know about the risks they take to protect the people of their communities.

This summer, one of my granddaughters fell and broke her arm. It was a serious break, and she needed to

be taken from the hospital in Owen Sound to London. An air ambulance was called and she was flown to London for emergency surgery. My wife, Jane, accompanied our granddaughter on that flight, and she couldn't say enough positive things about the professionalism of the paramedics. The air ambulance team reassured my granddaughter and took care of all of her needs.

Bill 123 also gives me pause to think about two firefighters from North Perth who made the ultimate sacrifice. On March 17 of last year, North Perth volunteer firefighters Ray Walter and Ken Rea died as they battled a fire in a retail store in Listowel. Here's what one eyewitness, Kelly Irwin, had to say: "You could see flames all along the west side and flames were shooting out of the roof. I heard a series of pops, like small explosions. I saw about five firefighters go in the front of the building and I didn't see any come out."

My son was working as a dispatcher the day of the deadly fire. He told me that when word got out that the two firefighters were missing, he was inundated with phone calls from local families. They were all anxious to know if their loved one was accounted for. Firefighters Walter and Rea made the ultimate sacrifice. If passed, Bill 123 would help us remember them.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora shared with me a copy of the book entitled 911: True Tales of Courage and Compassion. The book was written by one of his constituents, Vali Stone, and it provided the inspiration for his private member's bill. I am pleased that Ms. Stone can be with us in the gallery today and I welcome her to Queen's Park.

1440

I would like to end my remarks by quoting from the foreword to Ms. Stone's book: "911 emergency responders put themselves forward first to serve humanity and to help those who are in need, without any special treatment or expectations. They are here to make our lives better with their actions. They set the greatest example and they are our true heroes. May they always be protected and blessed."

Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I'd like to commend the member from Newmarket–Aurora for his initiative. It's a wonderful thing he's doing.

I can speak from experience myself, Speaker, over the years. When I was a councillor in Stoney Creek, which went from a town to a city, once a year I would go out on the fire truck and spend 12 hours with the fire department. They even dressed me up. I even got to help with a little fire, a bin that was on fire. They turned the hose up a little bit; I almost got blown off the hose, but I got the fire out.

I ate with them. I spent a whole shift with them. I learned what they do. The expertise, the time restraints—they were not happy if they couldn't respond within four or five minutes to a fire in any part of our city. Can you imagine getting on the truck, getting out there, getting set

up, and all within five or six minutes? It's absolutely astonishing.

I also worked in heavy industry, in Stelco. We had our own fire department in the plant. It was so big, it was a city within a city. At Stelco, we had a small fire department. If we got into trouble, if one of our blast furnaces, our open-hearth furnaces or our by-products caught on fire and it didn't get attended to, it would take out half the city, no problem.

Our firefighters from the Hamilton fire department would be in there. They would evacuate all of us. Our firefighters would assist them. They would take control of the situation. Many, many times—many fires at the blast furnace, the open-hearth furnaces, all over the place that we had fires in that huge industrial complex—those firefighters were risking their lives, and I mean literally risking their lives, because at any time explosions could have taken out a city block, no problem. They were right there fighting it. I can't even relate to the bravery that would be needed to do something like that. They all have families at home, too, and they are risking their lives for us and the city; absolutely fantastic.

Let us not forget—I remember at times reading the paper over the years where you'd see that a police officer helped deliver a baby, or paramedics helped deliver a child en route. What would have happened if they didn't get attended to at that particular time? Talk about multitasking: They're delivering babies. I mean, these people are absolutely wonderful.

Sometimes you think, "Well, they work 12-hour shifts." That's a long shift. If you work 12-hour shifts, you have to be on top of things. They exercise; they try to keep themselves in shape. They have an exercise room. They are on top of their game at all times, and without them, I certainly wouldn't feel safe.

I can't thank them enough for what they do and what they will continue to do. I can't thank them enough for what their values are, what they stand for. As the member from Newmarket–Aurora said, they chose this profession knowing the risks, and they put their lives on the line on many occasions.

Thank you, thank you, thank you for what you do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in this House and to lend my voice to the member from Newmarket–Aurora, my good friend and my former MPP. Before 2007, when I got elected to this House, Mr. Frank Klees represented me at this wonderful House.

The bill is to proclaim May 1 in each year as First Responders Day. First responders are the men and women volunteers and professionals who act as the first line of contact for most Ontarians in a state of emergency. They are responsible for the protection and preservation of life and our properties, from our homes to our vehicles to our workplaces and schools. They are the men and women who play the critical role in keeping our communities safe.

These men and women who have dedicated their lives, time and skills to public service to make sure that our

children and our families live in a safe society deserve to be recognized. First responders play a critical role in ensuring that the safety and security of our society is maintained. I strongly support my honourable colleague's effort in introducing this bill to the Legislative Assembly.

As a fellow member from York region, I also had the privilege of introducing a motion to this Legislature in the last Parliament which celebrates and recognizes the important and vital work that doctors do on behalf of Ontarians every day. The motion proclaimed May 1 as Doctors' Day in Ontario. I, alongside all of my honourable colleagues, recognized the invaluable role doctors play in our daily lives, and thus unanimously voted in favour of the motion. This bill before us today will certainly complement Doctors' Day in Ontario, build up on the importance of the day and continue to raise awareness of the important work and contributions which first responders make every day to Ontario.

I have had the privilege of meeting many first responders during my term as MPP for Richmond Hill, and I have seen first-hand the important and critical role each and every one of these brave men and women play in ensuring the utmost safety of all Ontarians is maintained.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support the honourable member's private member's bill and hope all members of this House will do the same.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is also my pleasure to support this bill from the member from Newmarket–Aurora. I want to thank all of the first responders who came here to listen to the debate today. It means a lot when people take the time to support what's going on in their Legislative Assembly, and I thank you for that.

I want to gloat a little bit before I go on, because my partners didn't leave me that many minutes on the clock. The Sudbury firefighters, and as well as the Sudbury Professional Fire Fighters Association, Local 527, have decided to paint the main pumper at the main station in Sudbury hot pink with big pink ribbons for Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which is the month of October. I was invited to see the truck. When you see a hot pink truck coming down the road, Mr. Speaker, every time there's a red light, people take out their cellphone and take pictures. Whenever they're stopped, they line up to take pictures of this thing. What a great idea, because right on the door is the phone number; the messages that breast cancer can be prevented, can be treated better, are all over the truck. All of the firefighters, for the month of October, wear a pink shirt. So I wanted to put that out there. I think they are the first to have done this, and it's really something that shows that not only do they help people in the day-to-day job that they do, but they also reach out to our community to try to help cast a broader net of helping people. I wanted to throw that in.

Last weekend, here again Local 527 of the Sudbury Professional Fire Fighters Association had an exercise where they invited city officials, MPPs, MPs and lots of our municipal councillors. They brought us out to one of

their exercise stations, where they trained us—I think I'm beyond training, but the rest of them did pretty good. We went through auto extrication and lift up the jaws of life and all of this. They also showed us how to do forcible entry, which doesn't use a whole lot of—I thought brutal force got you through forcible entry. Not all, Mr. Speaker. It's all technique. It doesn't matter; the biggest steel door can be opened, if you know how. And there was a simulation of a kitchen fire, which is quite an impressive sight to see. The member, Mr. Dunlop, was sharing about when he had a fire in his house. I'd say this is as close to having a fire in your house.

1450

So I want to thank the police officers, the firefighters, the military personnel, the paramedics, the medical evacuation pilots, everybody who works at Ornge—I know you've had it tough; it will get better—the dispatchers, the nurses, the physicians, the technicians in our hospitals. Everybody, thank you for the work you do. We appreciate you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I, too, am very pleased to rise in support of Bill 123, which we have all heard will proclaim May 1 in each year as First Responders Day.

First responders are vital to keeping our community safe from life-threatening dangers, and they do risk their lives every day to protect us in our communities. So in return, we must do our best to protect them.

I just want to mention some of the measures that our government has taken for that. Recognizing the very important work of firefighters, it is now easier for full-time, part-time and volunteer firefighters, as well as investigators who suffer fire-related illnesses, to qualify for workplace insurance benefits. These regulations now presume that eight types of cancer, as well as certain heart-related injuries that are suffered by firefighters, are work-related, unless proven otherwise.

Our government also passed legislation to allow mandatory retirement at age 60 for the province's salaried firefighters, and these changes standardize the retirement age for firefighters across the province.

I also want to mention, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, that since February 1989 the Ontario fire service health and safety advisory committee has been advising and making recommendations to the Ministry of Labour on matters related to the occupational health and safety of Ontario firefighters. To date, the committee has developed 72 guidance notes relating to firefighter health and safety issues. So I want to thank all the first responders, police officers, dispatchers, everyone for the work they do every day.

Many of the other members mentioned personal stories. As the MPP for York South–Weston, I witnessed a tragedy in our riding. A family of four was destroyed by a fire. The mother had gone to do grocery shopping; the father was home with two girls. He left a pot on the stove, went outside to greet a friend and then realized that a fire had erupted. He went back into the home, saved the

baby, then went back in to save his other daughter—and they both perished.

The community got together and had a fundraiser for the mother, now a widow, and the little baby, and it was really nice to see that all the firefighters, the police officers and the doctors at the hospital all participated. The community came together in a tragedy.

Thank you for what you do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: With the few seconds that we have remaining to discuss this, I wanted to do two things: thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for bringing forward this private member's bill, and thank you for including volunteers, whether they're firefighters, paramedics or St. John Ambulance.

You know, there is a difference when someone makes a choice in their community to protect their community through a volunteer role, and I know many of the members here rely very heavily on those volunteers. So I'm very pleased that that is included in this special day, and I just want to thank you for bringing this forward. It's a pretty important motion for all of us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Newmarket–Aurora, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I'm going to do something different with my two minutes. I want to thank all of my colleagues who spoke in support of this bill. I would ask all of the first responders in the House today to please stand, if you would. I'm going to ask my colleagues to join me in an ovation to thank you for what you do.

Applause.

Mr. Frank Klees: And I'd like to ask Vali Stone if she would stand. I thank you for your initiative of this book and for giving us a tremendous insight into the work of first responders. Thank you.

Now, Speaker, I will leave it to this House to determine what the next steps are. I would like the bill referred to the committee on general government.

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: My preference would be that we skip the vote and just go directly to committee. Of course we can't do that, but you can always try.

I've enjoyed very much the process of, first of all, contemplating what our first responders do. Then, I again want to thank everyone for coming because your encouragement—I know everyone is busy, and so the fact that you've taken the time to be here today to express your support, and through you your colleagues' support, is sincerely appreciated.

God bless you in what you do, and we look forward to celebrating you in a very special way on May 1 every year, starting this coming May 1. God bless you.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Newmarket–Aurora on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I hate to interrupt. I want to invite everyone to room 228 for a reception with our first responders. Members, I know we have some more debate, but if you have some time, please join us. All of our guests are welcome to room 228 for some time together. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member made a request for a vote right away, but unfortunately it will mess up my notes. I can't do it that way. We will take the vote at the end of regular business.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts en vue de mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour l'aménagement du logement axé sur le bien-être.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Speaker, it has been a tradition in this House to acknowledge our pages, and I don't know if there was an oversight today, but they didn't get thanked. We usually give them a standing ovation, and I would like to ask the members to join me in giving the pages a standing ovation.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank the member for reminding us. Thank you to all the pages for a great job in the last couple of weeks.

REGISTERED RETIREMENT SAVINGS PROTECTION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RÉGIMES ENREGISTRÉS D'ÉPARGNE EN VUE DE LA RETRAITE

Mr. Leal moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings / Projet de loi 120, Loi visant à protéger les régimes enregistrés d'épargne en vue de la retraite.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I rise today in the House to speak in support of my private member's Bill 120, entitled An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings, 2012. As you may be aware, the purpose of this bill is to protect registered retirement savings plans and registered retirement income funds, as well as deferred profit sharing plans, from most creditors. These plans, however—and I stress—will be subject to support orders under the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996, and orders respecting the separation of property in family members.

1500

I want to thank Mr. Mark Gaskell, a constituent resident of mine in Peterborough riding, for having the initial foresight to raise this issue with me. Mr. Gaskell very succinctly expressed his desire for the Ontario Legislature to protect from creditors what retirement savings the people of Ontario manage to accumulate in various forms of registered retirement savings plans, as have the provinces of Saskatchewan in 2003; Newfoundland and Labrador in 2006; Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, Quebec and Manitoba in 2007; and Alberta in 2000. After a thorough investigation in this regard, I heartily agree with Mr. Gaskell's observation.

I'd like to take a moment to applaud the efforts of Minister Bartolucci for having brought forward a similar piece of private member's legislation in June 2003, entitled An Act exempting registered retirement plans from certain enforcement processes.

At the request of Mr. Frank Zinatelli, the vice-president and general counsel of the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association Inc., subsection 4(2), that Bill 120 does not apply with respect to payments out of registered plans to which the Insurance Act applies, has been incorporated.

I'd also note that RRSPs cannot be used as collateral in borrowing transactions.

In 2004, in the case of Amherst Crane Rentals versus Perring, the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that RRSPs should not be subject to seizure by creditors if a beneficiary has been named. The court's analysis was based on deciphering the legislative intent of the Succession Law Reform Act, section 53.

All governments in Canada encourage early and regular participation in retirement savings and ask that Canadians rely not only upon government to provide retirement income sufficient to maintain a reasonable and healthy lifestyle as we go.

To facilitate and provide investment incentives, Canadians are provided with tax deferrals on income amounts invested in retirement savings. Saving for retirement through various instrument vehicles, such as retirement savings plans—RSPs; deferred profit-sharing plans—DPSs; or registered retirement income funds—RRIFs—is a wise and widely encouraged practice.

As Mr. Gaskell notes, in Ontario today, the vast majority of working people are self-employed or em-

ployed by small businesses. In fact, there are more than 340,000 small- and medium-sized enterprises across Ontario, which make up more than 99% of the province's businesses and account for more than 50% of all jobs. Many of these folks are not in a position to receive self-directed retirement vehicles to augment their pension plans as offered through the public or some private sector employment. As such, a considerable number of citizens must rely upon their personal investments, such as RRSPs, to sustain themselves through retirement years.

While all governments in Canada rightfully encourage these sorts of investments, current law in Ontario does not exempt DPSPs, RRIFs or RSPs from credit seizure. As such, the law in regard to credit seizure is inconsistent and therefore unfair in its treatment of registered retirement holders.

As previously stated, other provinces in Canada have already passed similar legislation with regard to this. In November 2007, the government of Manitoba, under the stewardship of Premier Greg Selinger, the then-finance minister, passed into law the Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act. As Premier Selinger noted, "The Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act is designed to protect from creditors retirement savings held in deferred profit-sharing plans, registered retirement savings plans and registered retirement income funds.... We want Manitobans to have retirement savings available in their senior years and so we have moved to protect these funds."

Likewise in 2005 the government of Canada, through amendments to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act under Bill C-55, initiated similar legislation. The act, subject to certain conditions and exemptions, exempts registered plans from being vested in a trustee as property available to satisfy the claims of bankrupt creditors. This bill has indeed received royal assent and has been proclaimed into law.

I can certainly understand why skeptics may be concerned that this legislation could possibly be used as a safe haven for debtors who wish to avoid or defraud their related creditors. However, this is certainly not the intent. As stated in the preamble, the legislation explicitly exempts orders made under the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, meaning that parents who are defaulting on child support can still be pursued, as can separated spouses.

Also, with retirement pension plans, the credit protection provided in a new law would not apply to the enforcement of maintenance orders or orders from a division of family property. Similarly, the federal act protects against debit abuse by capping the amount of the exemption by making contributions within 12 months of a bankruptcy available to creditors by requiring that the exempted amount be locked in until rolled over into a retirement income fund annuity or similar product.

In this economic climate of uncertainty and the fluctuation of world markets, I believe that the spirit of this bill is not only fair, but timely. Ontario's manufacturing sector has been facing many challenges, cur-

rency appreciation being just one of them. The main goal of this legislation is to reinforce our government's commitment—all of our commitment—not only to protect those retirees whose plans have been left unprotected, but also to the entrepreneurial success of Ontario's small business community.

As a former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation and chair of the Small Business Agency of Ontario, I understand the fundamental challenges and concerns facing Ontario's small businesses, let alone the courage it takes to stand up and operate a successful small business. From streamlining regulations to reducing paper burden, perhaps we can further assist small business people in Ontario.

As stated in the 2008 British Columbia Chamber of Commerce report entitled *Advocacy and Policy: Retirement Savings Protection*, "It is imperative that ... business people who provide so much of our province's employment and their employees enjoy the same level of protection as ... those covered by the current list of exempted investments. Other provinces in Canada have recognized the inequity in retirement protection and ... enacted provincial exemption statutes to fully protect self-directed ... savings" plans.

Ontario has garnered an award for being the most competitive province in a competitive nation from Site Selection, an American-based magazine located in Georgia, according to a provincial news release. This is the third consecutive year the province has claimed this particular award. Ontario received this prestigious award based on a globally competitive tax system, a streamlined business environment and investments in education, health care, electricity and infrastructure.

I also note that the RBC Economics Research Provincial Outlook for the month of September indicated that Ontario is holding its own with a modest acceleration of growth at 2.2%. The RBC report noted that the housing sector is doing extremely well and the auto sector is back on track with the assembly of light vehicles surging by more than 19%.

In British Columbia and Manitoba, the business community has recognized the value of protecting RRSPs from creditors. Likewise, the Manitoba chair of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, on November 29, 2006, to Mr. Jon Gerrard, the leader of the Liberal Party of Manitoba, expresses their desire to see passage of the government's retirement protection proposal: "On behalf of the ... CFIB" in Manitoba "and ... 4,800 Manitoba members, I am writing in reference to the introduction of Bill 6, the Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act.... The CFIB urges your party to support Bill 6 and ensure its passage as soon as possible. Removing this disincentive to" invest "in RRSPs by small business owners" and individuals "will ensure a fair and equitable solution to an issue they have faced ... far too long."

The United States, both at the federal level and the state level, have passed legislation to protect 401(k) plans for bankruptcy—401(k) plans are the equivalent of

RRSPs in the province of Ontario and Canada. The Employment Retirement Income Security Act protects retirement income held in most 401(k)s that are defined benefits.

As the American financial advisor company Charleston Financial Advisors LLC states: "ERISA contains an 'anti-assignment' rule that provides broad protection from creditors' claims. This anti-assignment rule applies whether you've declared bankruptcy or not—no bankruptcy or judgment creditor can reach your 401(k) plan account, if the plan is governed by ERISA."

This type of initiative certainly has not been overlooked by our counterparts in Washington. In 2006, the United States government signed into law the Pension Protection Act ensuring greater retirement security for American workers. In part, this pension protection initiative contains provisions for workers who have saved for retirement through defined contribution plans, much as we've been hearing in America during this presidential cycle. The 401(k)s are very similar to our registered retirement plans here in Ontario and, indeed, Canada.

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California, Illinois, Michigan, New York and Ohio are examples of states who provide this kind of protection. The Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act, a piece of United States federal legislation effective for bankruptcies, filed on October 17, 2005, gives protection to a debtor's individual retirement account—IRA funds—in bankruptcy, by the way of exempting them from bankruptcy estate.

I believe that these challenging economic times call for a steady hand and wise economic decisions, no matter the size or the complexity. Each on our own, we can rise to the challenge of the global economy and move forward in a prudent and financially responsible way. As such, this is a simple idea that has the potential to protect Ontarians, both in terms of social security as we age and in terms of the present economic development situation.

As Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson stated in his last speech to Canadians in April 1968: "A wise man once observed that failures are only made by those who fail to dare, not by those who dare to fail." Today, let all members of this Legislature be daring and pass Bill 120.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to join in the debate on Bill 120, introduced by the member for Peterborough. A version of this bill was first introduced in 2008. It passed through the committee with amendments but was taken no further, even though it sat on the order paper for about three years. I understand that the current bill resembles the amended bill from the last Legislature. It would be interesting to hear from the ministers why the government did not move the previous bill forward after allowing it to pass through committee in 2010.

My colleague, I'm certain, has introduced a bill with a noble purpose, one that our party did not oppose in 2008, and one I would support taking to committee again for

discussion. We all support helping people in Ontario save for retirement and ensure that their savings are secure, yet some of the financial stakeholders I have recently consulted are concerned about the effectiveness of the bill. I would like to just go over a couple of the questions that were raised to me.

One question was: Should the individual who puts money in his RRSP be better off with creditors than a small business person who kept all his money available to build the business? We certainly hear of those people over and over again: people who recognize the value of continually plowing money back into their business. The question, is, I think, a fair one: Would the person who has the RRSP, in fact, be better off?

Would this bill be an incentive for a person who is going bankrupt to load up his RRSP contributions, to the detriment of creditors? The bill is attempting to make RRSPs judgment-proof by saying that a creditor can't get money out of them, but the creditor can get at the money as it is drawn out for retirement. In fact, that's the law. Does this mean we are hoping creditors will just go away or die if they have to wait for years until the person is old and has to start drawing the funds out?

RRSP funds have to start to be withdrawn at a certain age, which I think now is about 72. My contact has suggested that a creditor can get an order attached to an RRSP so that the order will be enforced when the money is withdrawn. Such an order would have to be renewed periodically to keep it alive, and it's apparently not too expensive to continue the order. Will this bill achieve nothing more than just a deferral in enforcement? I think Bill 120 raises a lot of questions that we need answers to. What range of retirement savings can and should be protected from creditors? Many people use the equity built up in their home to fund their retirement, by moving to a less expensive home or community. I doubt we would ever consider protecting this equity from creditors. Are savings in an RRSP more like this equity or more like pension plans? There are no easy answers to these questions, but I think we need to ask them, and we need to have experts to look for advice.

I look forward to sending this bill to committee for a full and frank discussion. We need to hear the views of the public to ensure that we are fair to everyone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Every Thursday that this House has been in session for the last 11 years that I have had the opportunity to stand here, I have watched good bills come and go. This is another example of a very good bill that ought to be law.

I want to preface my remarks on the bill itself with a plea to the Liberal members over there, particularly to the whip of the Liberal Party, who is the person putting this forward. Please do not let such a bill as this one or the one we debated before or the one we're going to debate after today simply die—because most private members' bills, in spite of what people say in this House, end up

nowhere. Most of them are approved here. Most of them go to committee, where they are never the subject of people coming to speak to them, they are never the subject of a committee report, and even those bills that are lucky enough to go through the committee stage and are referred back for third reading never get called by the government. So every time I have an opportunity to raise this issue, I try to raise it.

If we are truly serious about these bills, if we truly think that the member from Peterborough has a good idea and that we want to change how RRSPs and other things are protected in law from creditors so that people can retire in dignity with the money they have saved and put forward for that purpose, then we have to be prepared to do more than simply argue them in this Legislature. We have to be prepared, as legislators, to work together and to make sure that the caucuses—not just the House leaders and not just the Premier and not just the leaders—have the final say in what happens to these bills. We have dozens of good ideas each and every Parliament, dozens of ideas that die on the order paper and have to be reintroduced again and again.

Now, I do remember—and I apologize if this has been up here more than once before, but I do remember Mr. Leal standing in his place and arguing this same bill in the last Parliament. I remember everybody saying it was a good idea, and I remember it going back to oblivion. I don't want to see this happen again. And I will speak whenever I get a chance on any other bill that I think is worthy of going beyond this stage, to implore the people who are here to make sure this does not happen. Rise up in caucus if you have to rise up. Tell the House leaders, when that time comes and they're negotiating what bills need to go forward, that we don't want one from each party as a maximum, maybe to be discussed. We want all the good bills to come forward. We want them to see the light of day. It's not just a government bill that needs to be debated, and it's not just a government bill that holds some merit, because, in my view, some of them don't hold any merit at all. But I will say that for those private members' bills that we all agree upon in this place, we ought to do something about them.

It would be a total shame if Mr. Klees's bill—the member from Aurora, who spoke, and we gave standing ovations for that today—simply died. That would be a shame, and the first responders who were here would think very little of us if that's all that happened today. The same is true with Mr. Leal's bill, the member from Peterborough. The same will be true of the bill by my colleague from Hamilton Mountain. I think it's a good bill, too, and I hope that something happens with it.

So that's the preface to my remarks.

I'm only going to spend a minute or two on the actual bill itself, because I think Mr. Leal covered it quite well. I will be here when it comes to a vote, and I want something to be done with this, because the people of this province who put their money aside for retirement should not have it taken away if they find themselves in some kind of financial difficulty. Because what is going to

happen with them is they are going to live out their retirement years in penury and misery, even though they've done everything in their power, should some calamity befall them, whether it be a car accident, whether it's being sued, whether it's any number of things. They cannot live their life in poverty if they have tried their very best to put that money aside.

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Just in terms of the bill itself, there is a loophole in the current law, as Mr. Leal has pointed out: RRSPs are vulnerable to credit seizure. We have to close that loophole. As the proponent here has said, this is happening in many places across this country already. It's happening in the United States. People who know about this dilemma have tried to close the loophole. We have tried to close the loophole in Ontario before through the endeavours of the member from Peterborough, but it went nowhere.

But in this time, when all of us are talking about pensions, when pensions are one of the key defining issues that you see constantly in political thought, when Harry Arthurs gives his whole statement and gives us ideas of what should be done for pension reform, when we're talking about the Canada pension plan and whether it is sufficient, when we're talking about Ontario pensions, when we're talking about all people in this province having the opportunity to contribute to a pension and have one, then I think it's also time for us to do what is necessary here. I want us to protect RRSPs, registered retirement income funds, deferred profit-sharing plans and everything else. If Manitoba can do it, if the United States can do it, then we can do it here in Ontario, too.

The will has to extend beyond today. The will has to extend for the entire life of this Parliament, through all the processes: through the committee process, through third reading, through negotiations. We need to see this bill and so many others become law, because the best ideas of all are the ideas that individual members bring forward in this House and champion and want to see done for the benefit of all Ontarians.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It certainly is a pleasure to rise in this House and to see a more collegial atmosphere this afternoon than perhaps occurred a week or so ago.

I certainly am going to be supporting Bill 120, brought by our colleague from Peterborough. It does protect registered retirement savings plans, registered retirement income funds as well as deferred profit-sharing plans from creditors. I think it's a very well-balanced and well-thought-out bill because, of course, it does continue to ensure that, in the case of a separation of property in family matters, these will still be considered part of those settlements to support orders enforced under the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996.

My colleagues on the other side of the House have made some, I think, very useful contributions in terms of,

first of all, perhaps having some more discussion at committee, and also the plea from the member for Beaches—East York to in fact consider our private members' bills that passed second reading here—that they should move forward. I certainly concur, and I'm sure many people on this side of the House, many of our members, would agree with that. Certainly, we will urge our House leaders to look at these again and ensure that they move forward.

The breadth of this bill is very interesting. I was interested to learn that there are some 400,000 small and medium businesses here in Ontario. I think this bill will provide some reassurance to those business owners that their investments in savings for their retirement will be protected.

We know that seniors are living in poverty in this province, an unfortunate number, and in some cases, this is because they have not had the desire or perhaps the opportunity to invest in the savings that are potentially there for them and which all governments, of course, encourage them to invest in.

In the research that I did, there were some interesting statistics in terms of bankruptcies in general in Canada. In fact, they are decreasing quite dramatically. There was a peak in 1997 of some 14,000 bankruptcies; in 2011, we were down to 3,600. So this is hopefully improved business planning on the part of entrepreneurs, perhaps more caution in terms of debt load. So there is some good news. There were in fact only some 1,276 bankruptcies in Ontario.

I think we all know that there are various types of creditors: unsecured creditors, secured creditors, preferred creditors. When a trustee in bankruptcy is appointed, they take into account what is considered the bankrupt's surplus income, and there's a very detailed list with dollar amounts attached, and the trustee decides what is required to maintain a reasonable standard of living. I think what's being argued here is that retirement savings should be part of that protected list, which is required to sustain a reasonable standard of living.

Other provinces have done this. The baby boomers are approaching retirement. More and more seniors need to be encouraged in every way to ensure that they do invest, that they are sustainable in terms of income through their retirement years. I think this is a very good bill which will further that goal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to thank the member from Peterborough for bringing this forward. I know he brought it back in 2008. It went through some process and never really got for a third reading, but I do commend him for that. I think he shows the type of person that I really think he is outside of all the ideology differences that we might have.

I think everyone here really would be supportive, it would be my sense, listening to the remarks today, of making sure that those people who take time to plan for their own retirement should be protected because they're not putting the money in the economy or into their

standard of living. They're assuring they'll have some sort of standard of living going into the future.

As remarks have been made by some of the other members, the small business person is the one I feel really has nobody but themselves, and self-reliance is a pretty Conservative premise. I support the bill for that reason as well but also for the real story about pensions themselves. This, I believe, is quite simple: It's to protect these from creditors and others. The member from our side Ms. Munro, from York—Simcoe, who's quite expert in this discussion, has written a paper on it, and I'm sure she has consulted with the Arthurs report as well.

But here's the real issue. The vast majority of people in Ontario don't have a pension, and that's the tragedy of it all. There has been a larger discussion. We should, with the aging population, provide for people to tie in, and some of the unions have been pushing this. The CPP plan should be amended so there could be a part 2—not a mandatory contribution but an optional contribution to a larger fund because the larger the fund, the more leverage it has in the marketplace for a better return on the investments.

Now I can tell you this, and the general public doesn't understand it: We provincial members do not have a defined benefit plan. We do have a pension. It's called a defined contribution plan, and that is quite a difference because all of the risk is off-loaded to the individual. The employer, be it the government—Premier McGuinty, in this case—gives us our contribution each year. It's sheltered in a plan. It's a registered pension plan.

Interjection: Thanks to Mike Harris.

Mr. John O'Toole: The government hasn't changed it in 10 years, so you can just stop the talking. It's very controversial.

Here's the issue. There are solutions to these things, but the plan itself, my plan—and I took the securities courses. I have some knowledge on the topic. I was a personnel manager for a large company at one time. Here's the deal: Most pensions are in mutual funds, and they're all basically in the ditch. They're all in the ditch by probably 15%. There isn't one plan in Ontario that's funded—not one. Okay? Despite what they tell you, they're not funded. Why? Because the market itself is down.

There are three fundamental assumptions actuarially in a pension. The number of people paying is important. One retired to 10 working, that was a typical model. In education today, it's one retired, and I think it's 2.5 working. There's not enough people contributing. Companies themselves are outsourcing and downsizing, and that's a problem—the number of people paying into it.

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Return on equity is the other assumption. It's about 6.5% to 7% over the longer term. Today, if you were to get 3%, you'd be overpaid on capital. You might get 1.5%, maybe up to 2.1% if you had \$500,000 or more to deposit into a plan. And life expectancy is a third assumption that's wrong. People are living past 90. I go to lots of 100th birthdays, and lots of 60ths and 65ths.

So there are three assumptions: life expectancy, return on equity and the number of people paying—the size and shape of the organization. All of the assumptions don't work today. There is no job that's going to last for 30 years today. So people need this protection, Mr. Leal; I'd agree with it in that context. I would also mention that your government has had two attempts at pension issues. Now, we all say the most expensive plan in Canada and in Ontario is the teachers' pension fund. They owe \$30 billion. And who is the employer? The employer is the taxpayer of Ontario. It isn't funded.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it's \$30 billion on the operating side; I'm just saying it's over that—greater.

Now, we are all getting letters from AMAPCEO—the management people in the public sector—to not touch their pension. There is legislation before the government—I think it's passed already by Premier McGuinity and the Minister of Finance—to change that fund and pool it, a larger pool. But they don't want it done, and I think you should listen to employer groups.

I would say that OMERS and HOOPP and MPAC are all funds that are completely screwed up because of organizational changes—not the individuals; I'm not saying that. The plans themselves are amalgams of former plans. HOOPP is the hospital organizations. How do we deal with those groups that are succession groups within that?

It's an important bill, and I'd say, being that I'm almost 70—there are other people in the room older than me, but not too many—there comes to a point where I can't contribute and eventually I have to form an annuity. And what happens with an annuity when interest rates are low, which they are today—it's a very bad time to buy an annuity, because its future value is priced on today's cost of money. The worst time in the world to buy an annuity is when interest is low.

You should put your funds and give us more discretionary use. I think pensions generally should be top of mind for people. Make the rules to contribute simpler for people. Again, really what this does is protect them from seizure by creditors, and I think that's a laudable thing. I think I would put some time into working with the member from York-Simcoe, because she has done a lot of work on the pension side herself. I wonder why the government wouldn't take your bill and fast-track it into committee as a modest reform to pensions, sending a signal to the market that the basket of money you have is somehow protected.

Let's keep in mind that there are people who will see opportunities there, if they're looking to go into receivership or something. Say you were a small business person, and you saw the numbers going south. You'd be smart to hammer a couple of hundred thousand into a registered plan or a registered trust so it's protected, and then go bankrupt, and the people who have loaned you the money—my bank—lose the money, do you understand? There are ways to manipulate rules, and those who are manipulators will take advantage of that, I suspect.

My colleague the member from Oshawa and I both represent hard-working, middle-class people, and their income, whether it's deferred income in the form of a pension—that's a big discussion, because pensions are a source of reward for work. It's called deferred income. I think it's important to protect that sort of income as well. In fact, that's what is happening when those large, “too big to fail” companies—and the rules were changed by Rob Rae and Floyd Laughren. They changed the rules to deal with Algoma Steel, to take the money out of the surplus in the pension fund and use it to recapitalize the company so it would be competitive. What happened? All the large companies said, “We want that exemption from the ‘too big to fail’ rule.” Algoma, Inco, Dofasco, General Motors, Chrysler, Ford—none of them funded their pensions because of that rule change.

It was a mistake, and the moment government started tinkering with it, they assumed the liability for the deficits pensions are in. Almost every pension is in trouble, and this bill goes a little way to fix it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: This is where the member from Durham really needed 20 minutes. Regrettably, all you had was—what?—eight minutes. It was simply not enough. I really observed that.

I want to say that I support Bill 120 as well, as have all the members who have spoken. And I suspect that even the members who haven't spoken agree 100% with what you have said. I say to you, member from—

Ms. Soo Wong: Peterborough.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Peterborough—how could I have forgotten? A nice little town.

You made a strong case and you made a good case for why it should be in law. And what did you say? Well, you said six other provinces have done it and most of the states in America have done it, and then I think to myself as you argue that, why isn't Ontario doing it? The member from Peterborough introduced this in 2008. It was good then; it's good today.

I'm puzzled as to why your government hasn't done this in light of the fact that opposition members—the loyal opposition—are saying it's a good thing; we, the third party, say it's a good thing. And in spite of that support and in spite of the fact that six provinces have done it and most states have done it, your government still lags behind. I don't get it.

What I note, as well, in this debate is that it doesn't require your finance minister to put one single penny into this that I'm aware of—I could be wrong. If it is not a money issue, and the whole world has done it—and your Premier is saying no. I want to support you, Jeff, the member from Peterborough; tell me what I need to do to help. Because I know the member from Oak Ridges-Markham said, “We're all very supportive of trying to get bills into committee and get them passed”—she said that, but it's not happening. And I often have argued in this place that only once in the 1990s, when we were in government, did we pass 16 or 17 private members' bills.

It was an amazing feat, something that has not been repeated ever again by my colleagues on the right or you guys in the centre. And that to me makes no sense; it really doesn't.

If members are saying, "Yes, we should make it happen," then we can find a way to make it happen. We just have to do it. I am saying to you, member from Peterborough; Let's talk to the Premier, let's talk to the finance minister and say, "Where's the roadblock?" So that we can get this done—at least, once we set up committees, which is just a matter of a short period of time, I'm sure.

I think this is the kind of bill that—yes, there are other things that could be done, of course. Sixty-five per cent of the people, as the member from Durham said, don't have a pension whatsoever. Only 35% of people do, and most of them are civil servants. But yes, many in the private sector, where they have unions, God bless, have some form of a private defined benefit plan. But in some cases, it's not that great. But the majority of people have no pension whatsoever—and we're not just talking about small business people and high-income people that have an RRSP plan. The rest of the people that have no money have absolutely nothing except the CPP, to which they might have contributed, or the old age security and the supplement if they have no other money. We are income poor, and many are, in their senior years, very, very poor, so we have a lot of work to do.

This is a beginning that begins to protect some, but boy, do we need another plan. The New Democrats put into place—or at least as a proposal—the Ontario retirement plan, that protects the 65% of the people who have absolutely nothing. So let's move with this measure because at least it protects some people, and then move on to the next step where we can protect the majority of Ontarians who have absolutely nothing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm happy to speak to this bill. I want to make a couple of points.

First, we've heard a lot in the new economy—the conventional thinking about the new economy is that the new economy is going to be driven largely by small business. That's where the jobs are. So if that's where the jobs are, if that's where the economy is going to grow, if that's where our future is going to be over the next few years, then we have a special responsibility to all of the people who are employed in the world of small business.

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What is that special responsibility? Well, unlike those people who are employed in big business or big government, where they have well-established and secure pensions, all of those people in the world of small business—just as the small business owner is struggling to keep that business together and to build that business with three or four or five or six employees, so those employees themselves are struggling. They're struggling to make their weekly wage, their monthly wage, their yearly wage, but they also have a struggle or problem

with a longer-range plan, and that is planning their retirement.

If we're going to encourage small business, if we think that's where the jobs are in the future, we've also got to encourage employees not to be reluctant—not to be afraid—to work in the world of small business. We've got to make it attractive to them so that they're not always attracted to being employed in big companies and big government.

How can we help small business? How can we help those employees who want to work in small business, who have got a real job and can make a real contribution? What can we do? One of the things we can do is to help them plan for a secure retirement, and one of the ways that we do that, to help them plan for their secure retirement in the absence of a pension plan, is to help them to protect their retirement savings. That's what this bill is all about.

With a big pension plan, if a beneficiary runs into some problems—he's got to pay his debts and so on; maybe he goes bankrupt—he doesn't lose that pension plan. That sum of money in the pension plan is still managed by the big plan.

In the small business, the way the system works now, those savings that have been set aside in an RRSP or other retirement vehicles can be seized by creditors. That's not helpful to anybody, because the employee who has then lost his retirement plan is really getting hit twice. He's been hit sort of in midlife, at age 45 or 50, because he or she has had some difficult economic circumstances and has had to go into bankruptcy or lose other assets. But they're getting penalized a second time, further down the road, when they hit the age of 65 or 70 or whenever they choose to retire. They get penalized again 10 or 15 years down the road because they don't have that pension money that they had set aside years and years ago, years and years previously to that.

Why would we want to penalize those people twice? It's a question of fairness and equality, and it's also a question of helping small business attract the kinds of employees that would help small business to grow, to grow this economy, and to protect those small pensions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be able to add my voice to this bill, Bill 120. I want to thank the member from Peterborough for his persistence in ensuring this piece of legislation came forward, because as a rookie member of the House, this is news to me. I'm too young to understand, but I appreciate what the bill is intending to do.

I want to go back to the explanatory note from this particular bill, and I'm going to quote from the bill: "The purpose of the bill is to protect registered retirement savings plans and registered retirement income funds, as well as deferred profit sharing plans, from most creditors."

That, I think, is the really important piece. On one hand, all governments across Canada are encouraging all

of us to participate, and participate early, in terms of your retirement and retirement savings. Finally we've got a piece of legislation that talks about that.

Let me remind the House: This afternoon, I believe, the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation stood here in the House, recognizing the month of October as Small Business Month, Mr. Speaker. This proposed legislation will help the vast majority of individuals who are self-employed or in small businesses.

In fact, there are more than 300,000 small and medium-sized businesses across Ontario, making up about 99% of the province's businesses and accounting for over 50% of the jobs created here in Ontario.

The proposed legislation also assures small businesses that if they do declare bankruptcy, their small retirement savings will not be part of the creditors' seizure. This piece of legislation is the right thing to do.

The other thing is, my colleague from Peterborough also mentioned about other provinces having similar legislation. Sometimes we look at other provinces that are ahead of us in certain legislation. Not all other provinces' legislation is good for Ontario, but in this case, the proposed legislation I think is the right thing to do to support and ensure that Ontarians growing old will not be living in poverty. If you already have saved money, and you wish those savings to continue, you don't want to be under the creditor.

However, this particular legislation also suggests the fact that there are exemptions from enforcement. It's clearly listed in the legislation. It talks about all rights and properties and interests of the plan holder in a registered plan being exempted from any enforcement. But there are exceptions clearly outlined in the legislation, in such a way that if it needs to deal with the Family Law Act in terms of dealing with the director of the Family Responsibility Office—so it will have some exemptions to deal with certain situations.

I want to commend the member from Peterborough for being persistent about this kind of legislation. We are helping consumers, and especially those who are already in their time and years, and you want to support them so that they will not be living in poverty in older years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member for Peterborough, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the colleagues who spoke in support of Bill 120 this afternoon: the member from Scarborough—Agincourt, the member from Willowdale, the member from Oak Ridges—Markham, the member from York—Simcoe, the member from Beaches—East York, the member from Durham and the member from Trinity—Spadina.

Hope springs eternal. Certainly, we're hoping Bill 120 will get to committee. I think the member from York—Simcoe raised some very legitimate questions. If Bill 120 gets to committee—and I hope it will; it sounds like we have support on all sides of the House this afternoon to make that happen—then we would have the opportunity

to call in those experts and to have the opportunity to discuss the contents of Bill 120.

You're right; the member from Beaches—East York was the Chair of the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. This bill—in its previous form, Bill 96—went to that committee. A number of experts came in, and they provided a presentation. We actually amended that version of the bill, Bill 96, back then. It was recommended to the House for third reading, but in the big scheme of things, it didn't happen this particular time.

I'm confident that Bill 120 will go to committee for an opportunity for it to be reviewed in committee, and then, hopefully, be brought back to the House as a private member's bill or, indeed, perhaps part of government legislation.

I think one of the biggest topics we have in Ontario today and throughout Canada is the discussion about pensions and providing income in our retirement years. Bill 120, as I indicated in my remarks, is modeled after similar legislation in other provinces across Canada—and, indeed, the United States. It is a fairly simple concept that would have great ramifications, I think, for many people in the province of Ontario.

We all remind ourselves that 65% of Ontarians don't have a defined benefit pension plan and are depending on other financial instruments to secure retirement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll deal with the vote at the end of regular business.

1550

OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT ACT (CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'OMBUDSMAN (SOCIÉTÉS D'AIDE À L'ENFANCE)

Miss Taylor moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act with respect to children's aid societies / Projet de loi 110, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman en ce qui a trait aux sociétés d'aide à l'enfance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation. Miss Taylor.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause.

Miss Monique Taylor: That is a good sign.

It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to start second reading debate of this act to amend the Ombudsman Act with respect to children's aid societies, my first private member's bill.

When I was first elected last October, I knew this was an issue I wanted to bring forward, an issue that needed to be brought forward. Ontario's 47 children's aid societies perform a critical role in our province. Through the Child and Family Services Act, they are charged with

the responsibility to ensure the well-being and safety of our children. Under that act, they must investigate allegations that children may be in need of protection. They must provide protection where necessary, and they must provide guidance, counselling and other services. They must provide care. They work with exceptionally vulnerable children and families.

To fulfill their mandate, children's aid societies are given extraordinary powers: powers to remove children from the family home, put them in foster care or put them up for adoption. The consequences of an intervention by a children's aid society can be life-changing for the children and for their families.

There can be no doubt of the importance of the role played by those working in child welfare, and there can be no doubt about the critical nature of their work. It is an exceptionally difficult job, and there are many dedicated professionals working within the system. But, unfortunately, sometimes mistakes are made, and when they are, the consequences are devastating: devastating for the child and devastating for their family. And on top of the heartache and turmoil they are experiencing, they are faced with processes and procedures that they find impossible to navigate.

For years, I have heard stories from people who felt that they had nowhere to turn if they had a concern about their children's aid society. Since being elected, particularly in my role as the NDP critic for children and youth services, I have continued to hear many similar stories from all across Ontario. I would be surprised if there were members in this House who had not heard from constituents whose lives have been turned upside down by a children's aid society and who feel absolutely powerless to do anything about it. Some of these folks are here with us today in the gallery. They are here to listen to the debate in the hope that, finally, after years of speaking out, they will see some action.

The welfare of our children is one of the most important things our government can do, and often drastic steps have to be taken. There can be very few life events as emotionally disturbing as a child being removed from the family. It's devastating for the child and devastating for their family. Yes, sometimes it has to be done. Sometimes that drastic step has to be taken. Sometimes it's the only option to ensure protection for a child. But when it happens, it's absolutely critical that we get it right.

Our system and processes need to be above reproach. We must be sure we are doing everything right to be fair to the child and their family. We must ensure that we know the full story. Decisions must be absent of any bias, and we must make sure the child is placed appropriately and safely in a new home.

Given the importance and the consequences of any actions, it seems quite frankly unbelievable that we do not have a mechanism for fully independent oversight of the agencies charged with the most responsible work on behalf of the government. We must extend the Ombudsman's mandate so that he can perform independent, fair-minded, unbiased investigations into complaints.

The Ombudsman himself has repeatedly called for his mandate to be extended to include the children's aid society. Here's one of the quotes from him from February of last year: "I can't think of any area more ripe for oversight than child welfare. Children die and no one takes responsibility; no one answers the important questions. It's just so sad."

Undoubtedly, some will say there's already oversight of the children's aid society. They will cite the Family Court. They will cite the Auditor General, and they will undoubtedly cite the Child and Family Services Review Board. In the past, they have even mentioned the Office of the Chief Coroner and the paediatric death review committee. Let's look at these.

Obviously the chief coroner and the paediatric death review committee carry out an essential, vital, highly skilled function. But they come in after there has been a death—once the ultimate damage is done. They can most certainly help us understand what went wrong, but that is a small comfort to the family who have perhaps been crying out for months or even years.

The role of the Auditor General is to look at the money. Again, an important function, but the mandate doesn't extend to the type of issues that we're dealing with.

I think most people will appreciate that fighting things out in Family Court is not the most desirable avenue to resolve issues. It is an adversarial venue and it's very costly and it can take forever for a case to move through the system. We hear of court dates being cancelled at the very last minute. We hear of last-minute scheduling of courts. To say that the families are feeling outgunned by the children's aid society's lawyers is an understatement.

That leaves us with the Child and Family Services Review Board, a body that was set up supposedly to address some of the key issues families are dealing with. Unfortunately, many families feel, from their own dealings with the board, that their concerns were not addressed. Mr. Speaker, the success of our child welfare system is, to a large extent, dependent on the public's confidence in the system, and that confidence has been eroded for many. That is a problem that we need to correct, and it was hoped the establishment of the CFSRB would help in that regard.

But that's not what I'm hearing in respect to the CFSRB. The reality is that the CFSRB has too narrow of a scope to deal with many of the problems. They can't deal with anything that's before the court or anything that has already been decided by the courts. They may only look at procedural matters, and they can't investigate allegations into abuse or neglect. Any of those seeking or receiving children's aid society services can only register a complaint, meaning that the grandparents or any other concerned family members are excluded from this process.

As a measure of limited scope to the CFSRB, it is worth noting that they have only made 350 decisions in the past six years. Get your pencils out. Meanwhile, the Ombudsman, even though he has no authority to

investigate, received 429 complaints in 2008-09, 296 in 2009-10, 386 in 2010-11, and 491 in 2011-12. That's a total of over 1,600 complaints about the children's aid society in four years.

It's clear that whatever mechanisms are in place, there's a desperate need for the Ombudsman. By giving the Ombudsman the capacity to oversee the children's aid society, we will get the broad general authority and respect that comes with that office. We get skilled investigators and achieve an ability to receive analysis of the problems.

Those benefits have not gone unnoticed by other jurisdictions all across Canada. BC, Alberta, Yukon, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador have all recognized the wisdom of giving their Ombudsman the responsibility to oversee child protection services. Yes, it's true that Ontario is the only province that uses a third party to deliver those services. But in doing so, it does not relinquish its responsibility. Ontario's children's aid societies act on behalf of the government. They are governed by the Child and Family Services Act, and they are funded to the tune of \$1.5 billion of Ontario government money. It's time that Ontario caught up with the rest of the country.

1600

Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago, all parties in this House supported the member for Windsor West's private member's bill to establish Children and Youth in Care Day. During debate on that bill, everyone, including the Minister of Children and Youth Services, said we needed to do more. That message was heard loud and clear across this House, and this is our opportunity to do more.

The Ombudsman can deal directly with some critical issues with respect to the children's aid society. In doing so, he can help us identify and better understand recurring problems in the system. I urge all members to support this bill and help us move towards a better, more just child welfare system in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we have members here with us in the House today who have been fighting this battle for many years. I congratulate them on everything that they do. They've been rallying Queen's Park, they've been rallying all of their MPPs for years. There are petitions—everything that's going on. These families can't take any more; they don't know where else to turn.

I'm blessed to be able to stand here today in support of these families, and I'm praying with everything that I've got inside of me that today this House is going to support this bill and we are going to get it to committee and we are going to enact it into law, because this is necessary. This isn't a joke; this is something that has to be done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to Ms. Taylor's bill, the member for Hamilton Mountain, Bill 110, An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act with respect to children's aid societies. It would amend the Ombudsman Act, increasing the power of the Ombudsman to investigate Ontario's children's aid societies.

Ontario funds and monitors 47 children's aid societies as part of our commitment to support the well-being and protection of children. We believe in the important work done by children's aid societies and the crucial role they play in our communities. I truly commend any act which would seek to improve the accountability of any organization when they are found lacking, specifically one which services and cares for the young and vulnerable members of our communities.

It is my observation, however, that the children's aid societies have taken significant action over the last few years to ensure the accountability of these societies in the protection of children and youth they serve. The steps they have taken are effective. The mechanisms in place are mechanisms that Ontarians can have confidence in, that we're not lacking in accountability.

When I was first elected to this Legislature in 2003, I remember we heard a lot about the children's aid societies, about accountability and transparency, and the issues faced by the children under their care. The experience in Ottawa-Orléans is, the system needed help then, needed change, and children's aid societies and the government stepped up to this challenge.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in the years since my first being at this Legislature, I have heard less and less problems with the children's aid societies. I truly believe that they and we must be doing some of the right things. When I look at the changes that have been implemented—strengthened protections, improved resources and mechanisms for oversight that have been put in place—we're already on the right track. Already we have made so much progress in working with the children's aid societies, coming up with the mechanisms to better protect vulnerable children and youth.

We have implemented rigorous background checks for those proposing to care for a child receiving children's aid society services. These organizations have access to enhanced tools to assess risk to a child's safety and match their response to the needs of the child and family. Through alternate dispute resolution, we have promoted opportunities to resolve more child protection cases outside the courtroom.

These changes represent real progress which Ontarians can be proud of and have confidence in. In every other province in Canada, child protection is operated directly by government. In Ontario, we have chosen to have a different model, and I can proudly say that in this case, we are unique. We are unique in that our CASs are community-based, non-profit organizations with independent boards, community oversight and community representatives that are on those boards.

The model of community-based involvement has so many benefits. For example, when the community is involved in the governance of the society, they are more engaged and invested in the outcomes of families and children receiving services from a children's aid society. Perhaps most importantly, when children's aid societies are able to exercise innovation at the local level, it allows them to be sensitive and responsive to the local context, while delivering services in compliance with ministry

standards. This balanced approach means that our children's aid societies are accountable not only to the government but to the communities they serve.

Over the years, our government has taken important steps to further ensure the accountability of our children's aid societies: We have required that all children's aid societies have clear, transparent and consistent complaint review procedures; we have established the independent Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, which partners with children and youth and provides an independent voice for them to bring issues forward; and we have increased the mandate and powers of the Child and Family Services Review Board to independently review complaints related to children's aid societies and decisions of children's aid societies and adoption licensees.

I would like to take a moment to speak about the Child and Family Services Review Board, which operates at arm's length from government. The CFSRB is part of the social justice tribunals cluster that was formally designated on January 19, 2011. As I mentioned, it has the power to review complaints related to children's aid societies.

The Ombudsman is in fact able to investigate complaints about the Child and Family Services Review Board and report and issue recommendations arising from such a review. While not a direct oversight, the Ombudsman is still an important piece in this process.

It would seem to me that, through the CFSRB, the children's aid societies are already accountable to the Ombudsman, and while we absolutely remain committed to continuing to work closely with the Ombudsman to improve child protective services, I simply do not see a need here to fix something that is not broken, nor to duplicate an existing mechanism.

I think what I am trying to say can be summarized in a quote which I will finish off with. This was written by Mary Rutledge, the executive director of Family, Youth and Child Services of Muskoka, someone with first-hand knowledge and experience with the children's aid society:

"It is true that the Ombudsman does not have direct oversight, but that does not mean that they do not have input and authority ... the Minister of Children and Youth Services is accountable to the Ombudsman ... through government processes for system accountability, a local agency such as Family, Youth and Child Services of Muskoka is held to account for any complaint. The province chose not to stop at that level and put in place an independent panel; the Child and Family Services Review Board is fully mandated under the Child and Family Services Act and operates independent of government to hear and resolve complaints brought to it relating to child protection."

With that, I would like to conclude my comments today on Bill 110.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I want to commend the member from Hamilton Mountain for introducing Bill 110,

which would give the Ontario Ombudsman the authority to investigate and report on complaints to the province's children's aid societies. The Ombudsman himself has been calling for this authority for some time. He says, quite correctly, that the province's children's aid societies are going through a difficult period of structural revision and financial rationalization. The Ombudsman believes that his office is best equipped to investigate complaints against the children's aid societies because he will be able to identify systemic problems that may be at the root of some of the complaints. This is a good reason.

Right now, complaints against children's aid societies are dealt with by applying to the Child and Family Services Review Board. This is a tribunal that is part of the recently formed Social Justice Tribunals Ontario, which groups together, or clusters, several dispute resolution bodies. According to their annual statement, "Clustering will ensure the most efficient use of resources, and while that is important in and of itself, efficiency is also a key component of access to justice, since inefficient use of resources means that members of the public who seek to access the tribunals may be delayed or denied."

The same report tells us that during 2010-11, the Child and Family Services Review Board received 246 applications to have a complaint about children's aid society decisions reviewed by the board. In the same year, just 17 cases were heard, and in 11 of those, orders were made in favour of the applicant. So there was a problem with the original children's aid society decision in well over 50% of the cases reviewed. Since there were only 17 cases heard in 2010-11, there were some 229 open cases of kids improperly placed or unfairly removed from their families that have complaints about their current situation. That's 229 cases that were waiting to be heard.

1610

Mr. Speaker, we all know kids grow up fast. We also know that the parent-child relationship is dynamic and precious; it is central to our quality of life. Kids and parents can't afford to wait for the adjudicative process to get them there. It would appear that clustering is not working. The Ombudsman's office will provide a process that is efficient, objective and accountable to the public. For these reasons, I support Bill 110.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will try to put things in a little bit of perspective. We've heard from the member from Hamilton Mountain as to how the system presently works and what the system tries to do. There are lots of very good people, lots of social workers with good hearts and good intentions that work within the system and that really try to help. At the end of all this, we are human beings. It doesn't matter how hard we try, how good-intentioned we are, how big our hearts are, we all make mistakes. We all make mistakes because we are human beings.

If you find yourself working for the children's aid society, and all those good-intentioned social workers and everybody else who works there who love children

and want them to grow up to be all that they can be—they are human beings, and sometimes they get it wrong. When they get it wrong, the families involved try to get closure. They try to see what went wrong, what happened. The mechanism in place for them to do this is cumbersome, does not meet their expectations, does not meet their needs, and it fails them.

We have with us in the gallery today people that came down from Nickel Belt. Not very often, Mr. Speaker, do people come down from Nickel Belt; it is a long ride. It is a long and expensive ride. But right now Neil Haskett, Marjorie Beaudry, Lilliane Lalonde, Eve Thunderbird and Tammy Macintyre—they came down. They came down because they wanted to hear us. They wanted to hear what people had to say about this, because they are part of the hundreds of Ontarians throughout our province—throughout the geography—who want Ombudsman oversight. They want somebody who is on their side. They want an equal playing field so that we can get to the bottom of the questions that face them, their families and their children. They look to our Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman's office has the skills to do investigations. They know how to ask questions. They know how to get to the bottom of things. It could very well be that what he—because it's Mr. Marin—ends up saying is exactly what has been told to them, but they will hear it from a voice that they trust, that has their best interests.

It could very well be that we also discover that there are some systemic issues, that it doesn't matter how hard the people at the local level try to identify them and change them, that they are systemic, and only an office like the Ombudsman's office, which looks at complaints throughout our province—only his office will be able to bring meaningful changes to this.

Why is it that when we get elected and when we read the platforms of the three different parties—we all talk about the need for transparency. We all talk about the need for accountability. How do we make our democracy and how do we make our government stronger? A sure key to get there is transparency, accountability mechanisms. This is how you grow. This is how you get excellence out of the programs and services that we have.

To bring Ombudsman oversight to children's aid has nothing to do with—it's not because the children's aid society system is broken; it's not because they haven't done some good work. I could rhyme off hundreds of times where the children's aid society has done some excellent work. Children were helped because of what happened, and they ended up growing up to use their full potential because the children's aid society was there.

I'm not casting a spell that says, "Everything they do is wrong"—no, not at all. We need them. They do the work that they're mandated to do, and they do this to the best of their ability. Like every other human being, including the 107 MPPs in this chamber, they are human, and sometimes humans make mistakes.

When this happens, then you find out, being a family in a very, very vulnerable position—here you are, telling the people who have a say over whether your child is

going to be with you or not. You are trying to exercise your rights in a position that puts you at such a disadvantage that the chances of winning are really skewed, Mr. Speaker. They are really skewed.

They want an independent third party. The member from Hamilton Mountain has done her homework. She has shared with us the hundreds of complaints that the Ombudsman receives every year. What does he say to those parents? He tells them, "I'm sorry; I don't have oversight of children's aid." This is not what parents want to hear. The Ombudsman never asked for extra money; he never asked for anything. He asked for oversight so that he can help those parents.

I know that there are other members of my caucus who want to speak on this issue, so I will wrap up. But I would ask the people to really think about the situation where it's easy to say, "We need accountability. We want our programs and services to be stronger and better and meet the expectations of the people of Ontario." We have an opportunity to do that today by bringing Ombudsman oversight to the children's aid society.

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My time is up.

Mr. Paul Miller: It was up five minutes ago.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My good friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek has made sure that I heard him. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to speak about this proposed Bill 110. With my remarks, I want to first thank the Minister of Children and Youth Services for his leadership role in his very complex, challenging ministry and in supporting children and youth across the province. The minister is doing a great job and I want to recognize him in the House.

The proposed Bill 110, as it says, is to amend the Ombudsman Act with respect to children's aid societies. Let me go through some aspects of this particular legislation, Mr. Speaker, about what's currently happening in Ontario.

My colleague from Ottawa—Orléans spoke a little bit about it, but I want to reinforce that the message here is the fact that in Ontario, the children's protection system is completely different from other provinces'. It is important to know that the CASs in Ontario are accountable not only to the government but also to the communities they serve.

Ontario's CASs are structurally designed differently than any other provinces' in Canada. The Ontario CASs are independent legal entities. They are non-profit, community-based corporations with volunteer boards of directors, or Indian bands operating under the Indian Act.

1620

In contrast, as my colleague from Ottawa—Orléans said, the CASs across other provinces outside Ontario are directly operated out of a ministry or government department. Hence, their ombudsmen are involved to oversee their CAS activities.

Our government has taken a number of steps to ensure accountability. We all agree accountability is an important piece of agencies like the children's aid society, but I want to also stress a couple of other mechanisms the government has enacted.

We have established the independent Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, which provides an independent voice for children and youth by partnering with them to bring issues forward.

The other piece: We also have increased the mandate and the powers of the Child and Family Services Review Board to independently review complaints related to children's aid societies and decisions of children's aid societies and adoption licensees.

As we all know, currently the Ombudsman may investigate complaints about the Child and Family Services Review Board and report and issue recommendations arising from such a review. Right now, the Ombudsman of Ontario already has some role to play in reviewing CASSs.

Furthermore, when all else fails, there is Family Court. It is available to any individual or family.

On top of that, in Ontario we have 12 other financial and administrative mechanisms to oversee the CASSs. These mechanisms ensure some checks and balances of the CASSs. It was absolutely correct when the member from Hamilton Mountain talked about the accountability and ensuring protection of every young person in Ontario, but I want to make sure that if we go the route of creating another layer of oversight, we need to ask, through the committee, to have more conversation about this particular bill. I am particularly sensitive, coming from my previous roots, to the fact that we create another layer on top of what I already spoke about. In terms of costs, I know the member from Nickel Belt talked about how there would be no additional costs, but let's not forget in this House that I remember as a young nurse how many Ombudsman offices have been closed across Ontario. I remember those days. So I'm particularly concerned, if we're going to create another layer of oversight, that the operation piece is within the budget of the government and, more importantly, is it really going to help young people by protecting young people, another independent lens to investigate, to review and provide very solid recommendations?

With regard to this particular bill, I think that there are merits. There are certainly merits in terms of making sure that this particular bill goes to a committee to have another review and bring in witnesses to the committee on how to improve it. I think all of us received a copy of the letter from the member from Hamilton Mountain, and I'd like to have more wording, because I think if we're going to create this layer called Ombudsman oversight of the CASSs, I want a little bit more parameters, more definitions in terms of timeline, in terms of investigations, and more importantly, I want to hear from the experts out there, from the academics. Most importantly, we need to make sure this new layer of review by the Ombudsman that's being proposed by my colleague from

Hamilton Mountain will not become another bureaucratic layer to look at CASSs, because we already have a number of them.

So I thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 110 today. As I said in the House yesterday with regard to government bill 75, good public policy requires three foundational principles: oversight, recourse and accountability.

As legislators, we don't have oversight over all aspects of the administration of government. The work of many administrative bodies is exempt. The children's aid society is one of those. History has taught us that the need for oversight is imperative and that the Ombudsman is one means to achieve that end.

I'd like to read a little bit from the Ontario Royal Commission Inquiry into Civil Rights in discussing the origin of the Ombudsman, which developed in Sweden over 300 years ago. It states: "As royal power declined and representative democracy developed, Parliament felt the need of an official with duties similar to those of the Ombudsman to scrutinize the actions of administrative officials on behalf of, and to report to, the legislative body."

The Swedes recognized that "each official engaged in the administration of the affairs of government is largely answerable only to 'the law'" or their interpretation of it "and to" their "own conscience rather than to a higher official."

This can be problematic. Injustices deserve correction and this is difficult when, to quote later from the report, "There are wide areas of government into which the elected member of the Legislature has no power to inquire. We refer to the administrative" councils "of local governments ... and municipal bodies such as ... boards and ... commissions."

We can further extrapolate to include bodies such as children's aid societies, which do not allow oversight from elected officials.

"I would not for a moment suggest that the Ombudsman is a complete answer to the problems of administrative justice. He is ... just one tool, quite a good one, I think, but just one, and mankind needs many tools in this technological age."

Those are quotes from the royal commission in Ontario.

Speaker, an Ombudsman is not the be-all and end-all solution to the problems with the children's aid societies, but it does provide greater oversight and accountability. The existing act does provide a little bit, but as a legislator, I'd like to share my experience in one or two cases.

I would refer the members in this House to look at the Child and Family Services Act, section 103: "A child in care has a right ... to speak in private with ... and receive visits from ... a member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario or of the Parliament of Canada."

I don't know how many members have actually tried to exercise that right. I have, and I have been stonewalled by some children's aid societies, which have actually gone out and prevented me from exercising my right over that child in care.

I've seen tragedies such as Andrew Skinner and his wife, Lindsay, who went through the turmoil of a children's aid society case, I believe, unfairly and unjustly, and they had no remedy. Our public policy can never, never be justified if it doesn't provide remedies to the tragedies it creates.

Andrew and Lindsay spent over \$300,000 trying to find a remedy. They are still deeply in debt and there still is no recourse. I encourage all members of the House to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to rise to support Bill 110, a bill presented by my colleague from Hamilton Mountain.

Before I start, I just want to say how much I appreciated the remarks from the member Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. I thought they were eminently reasonable, as with the other members who have spoken on the bill.

I spoke to Bill 120, introduced by the member from Peterborough, and I said about that bill that he presented a very strong case for why we needed a law that protects people's money in RRSPs and related retirement savings from credit seizure. He made a case, arguing that six other provinces in Canada are doing it and most states in America were doing it. I thought it was a reasonable, good case, and I felt his government should be doing it because it doesn't even cost a dime.

1630

Then I heard the member from Hamilton Mountain do a similarly good presentation in defence of Bill 110. It was coherent. It was compelling. It was reasonable, practical, sensible and unideological. What more do you want by way of defence of a particular bill?

Then, I listened to two members—the member from Ottawa-Orléans and the member from Scarborough-Agincourt. These are arguments that I've heard before on a similar bill that was presented in the past. These are arguments that the former minister made in this House on this bill, and I find them indefensible; I really do.

The member from Ottawa-Orléans says that we have community oversight. No, we don't. That we have a provincial advocate. Yes, we do, but it doesn't have the investigative powers that an Ombudsman has. We like the provincial advocate, but he doesn't do the job of what an Ombudsman could do by way of an investigation around problems.

The member from Ottawa-Orléans argues the system is not broken. We're not saying the system is broken. We're saying that when people have a problem and they have no one to turn to, where do you go? We're saying the Ombudsman is the only person you can go to. We're not saying the system is broken. We're not attacking

children's aid societies. We're saying when there is a problem that a young person faces or a family faces with children's aid, where do you go?

The member from Scarborough-Agincourt says this would be another layer. It's the same argument that previous Minister Broten made around this issue. It's not a layer; it is a person you go to when you want an independent problem to be investigated. When you want a strong advocate, when you want a fair-minded person to investigate a problem, you go to the Ombudsman.

Most of the other provinces in Canada do that, which is the case the member from Peterborough was making around his bill. If most other provinces in Canada are sensible and reasonable enough to say "We need Ombudsman oversight," why are you not doing it? My fear is that you're just too afraid. You're too afraid of negative publicity that could come from such an investigation. Rather than your Premier leading on this and saying, "We want problems to emerge. We want to see what the problems are, systemic or individual, because we want to solve them," rather than having a Premier and a minister who say that, they make all these senseless arguments against it that make you, all Liberals—all of you—look so bad. It's pitiful.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I just want to first start by acknowledging the member from Hamilton Mountain for the right reasons, for the right time. It's an item that's been here a couple of times before in different formats. I like to think that the title of the bill could almost be copied from Bill 115, putting children first; in fact, Bill 115 put them last basically. So a true name for this is "putting children first."

The member from Nickel Belt also said that we're all human and we all make mistakes. I think this is when you put children first—they say things that perhaps sometimes got the whole system started; they might accuse somebody of something. There needs to be a fair, independent, capable way of resolving these disputes fairly. That, I think, has been explained by most speakers, that the Ombudsperson is a trusted individual. In the case of the current one, Mr. Marin, he's certainly in the media more frequently than some of them. We'll leave it at that. But I think being an advocate type, the Ombudsman has to be fair in their dealings and reviews of cases under children's aid.

I meet with children's aid. In our case, I don't blame the children's aid specifically in the case. The member from Burlington said there are some inefficiencies in the system, and I think she said that there were 17 cases heard in 2010-11; and yet there are over 229 cases of children where the decisions made by somebody are being challenged but not being heard. So they are perhaps in the wrong placement of care.

I met recently with the New Heights Youth Centre in my riding, and these are children who, under some section, are in sort of open custody. They're 16- and 17-year-olds, and they're in this youth centre under the direction of and being paid for on a per diem basis by

children's aid, by taxpayers' money. I've had complaints of drugs and stuff like that being around and maybe not enough supervision, but when I'm meeting with these people and the neighbours who are affected by this, they tell me that on the per diem that's being paid, they don't have enough money to adequately supervise and oversee and help mentor these young children into a new point in life. Often, we hear from the government—and with all due respect, I see a couple of ministers here. They're saying that there's not enough money in the system to do the job properly. I don't want to put children's aid at blame, but I only say that having the Ombudsman come in or the Auditor General come in and say that there's an inappropriate use of money, resources, staff, whatever, is a good thing. I know my children's aid is in a deficit where they've laid off half the resource people who are really—I believe myself that they're trying to help children.

It's the system that needs the help. It needs the commentary from these independent officers of the Legislature, like the Ombudsman or the Auditor General, to come in and say, "There's a problem here. Here are some recommendations." That goes to the estimates or the review of the public accounts committee—many of my peers are on those committees—and they can take action and bring some results.

At the end of the day, helping children: That's really what this is about. I don't think it's picking wars or saying, "Okay, all children's aids are bad" and all that stuff. That's not the case at all. I think the arguments that have been made have been made very fairly here. The member from Burlington spoke in such a short term, but explained it very well: There are inefficiencies in the system, and the children are disadvantaged because of those inefficiencies, wait-lists etc.

Now, I've seen other CASs on the news with problems, and the disputes resolution system just does not seem to be working. They even appeal. I tell them myself to write to the Ombudsman on occasion. If I find that there's no satisfactory response from an indifferent minister, I sort of say, "Give the Ombudsman a bit of a poke."

But at the end of the day, I think everyone here wants to make sure that children are first, and that would be a good name for this bill. I just offer that as a recommendation. Putting children first: That's what this is about. I think that's what I hear being said in the Legislature today. I think children need a comfortable, supportive environment—preferably their homes—for their futures and for our collective future as a province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Hamilton Mountain, you have two minutes to reply.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the members for Ottawa-Orléans, Burlington, Nickel Belt, Scarborough-Agincourt, Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Trinity-Spadina and Durham. I would also like to recognize and thank the Minister of Children and Youth Services for

being here and listening to this debate today. I commend you for that. Thank you for being here.

This is a bill that, like I said, has been asked for, for many years. Families are in need. I've heard there are other systems in place, and yes, we know there are other systems in place, but there isn't enough of an oversight system to deal with all of the missing loophole pieces. That's where we need to look. How do we fill in those gaps? I mean, this isn't a new story. I've met with Ontario children's aid societies. I've met with the Provincial Advocate. I've talked to the Ombudsman. We all know that the system needs to be looked at, so let's just let the Ombudsman come in, take the roof off and have a look inside. Let's build a new roof.

I agree: We don't need layers on top of layers on top of layers, because that's only holding up the court systems longer, it's keeping the children in limbo longer. That's not the purpose of this. This is to make a system that works for everybody. For the children, for the families, let's get it right. Let's figure out how we can put families back together again instead of sometimes, unfortunately, pulling them apart where it's not necessary. These are the things that we need to look at. This is what I'm looking to the Ombudsman for.

I hope that you support this bill today. I know many people right across this entire province are looking to us for this today. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

FIRST RESPONDERS DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DES PREMIERS INTERVENANTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 61, standing in the name of Mr. Klees.

Mr. Klees has moved second reading of Bill 123.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Klees.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank my honourable colleagues for this. I'd like it referred to the committee on general government, when it is struck.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Agreed? Agreed.

REGISTERED RETIREMENT SAVINGS PROTECTION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RÉGIMES ENREGISTRÉS D'ÉPARGNE EN VUE DE LA RETRAITE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Leal has moved second reading of Bill 120.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Leal.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks for all the support on all sides. I would want to send Bill 120 to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, which will probably be operating in the not-too-distant future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Agreed? So referred.

OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT ACT
(CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'OMBUDSMAN
(SOCIÉTÉS D'AIDE À L'ENFANCE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Miss Taylor has moved second reading of Bill 110.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Miss Taylor.

Miss Monique Taylor: I move it to justice policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): It is requested that the bill be referred to justice policy.

Agreed? So referred.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, October 15, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1643.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
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Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
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McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
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Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
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Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Cindy Forster, Monte McNaughton

Yasir Naqvi, Teresa Piruzza

Michael Prue, Peter Shurman

Soo Wong

Clerks / Greffiers: Valerie Quioc Lim, Katch Koch (pro. tem)

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of Ontario**

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**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
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(Hansard)**

Monday 15 October 2012

Lundi 15 octobre 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 October 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 octobre 2012

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy on a point of order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I rise today on a point of order for the purpose of correcting the record. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to correct my record with respect to statements made in the House regarding the production of documents in response to the motion passed by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012.

On September 24, 2012, approximately 36,000 pages were delivered by the Ministry of Energy and the chief executive officer of the Ontario Power Authority to the clerk of the Standing Committee on Estimates and the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. At the time, it was my honest belief that the documents that had been produced to the Clerk comprised all of the documents in the possession of the Minister of Energy, the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority that were responsive to the motion passed by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask—I'm trying to listen very carefully, and I know that the minister will get to the point at which he is going to be correcting the actual things that were said.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, as you know, I personally signed a letter to the clerk of the Standing Committee on Estimates indicating it was my understanding that the documents provided to the clerk on September 24, 2012, constituted all responsive records. In and around the date on which the documents were produced, I made a number of statements in the House and the media to the effect that all documents that were responsive to the committee's motion of May 16 had been produced.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm hearing phrases that I know are not acceptable in this House, and I won't accept them. If I hear them again, I will ask individual members to withdraw.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Several days after the production of the 36,000 pages to the Clerk, it was brought to my attention by officials at the Ministry of Energy that

both the ministry and the Ontario Power Authority had determined that their initial search for records may have missed records of certain inactive employees, and that some employees may not have used consistent search terms. When I was notified that the ministry and OPA would be conducting an additional search, I asked officials to ensure that they take the necessary steps to determine whether any responsive records had been missed and, if so, to produce those to the Clerk as soon as possible.

Late last week, I was notified that the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority had confirmed that a large number of additional documents had been identified and they would be produced to the Clerk of the Legislature on Friday, October 12.

At the time that I made the statements that all documents had been produced, there was no deliberate intention to provide incorrect information to this House. Any incorrect information provided to this House was provided inadvertently and unintentionally. I am very disappointed that the error was made. That said, I know officials at the ministry and the Ontario Power Authority have always conducted themselves in good faith, as I have.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader, on a point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

It is my intention to move forward, and I wish to do so as calmly as possible, and I will continue to work for that.

Government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On a point of order, I would also like to take this opportunity to correct my record with respect to statements made in the House in relation to the production of documents by the Minister of Energy, the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings will come to order, and if I hear it again, he will receive his first and only warning.

Mr. Paul Miller: Pinocchio's got nothing on you guys.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek will now receive a warning. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: As the Minister of Energy has just noted, on September 24, 2012, approximately 36,000 documents were delivered by the Ministry of Energy and the chief executive officer of the Ontario Power Authority to the clerk of the Standing Committee on Estimates and the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. It was my understanding at that time that all documents that were responsive to the motion passed by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012, had been delivered. On this basis, I made a number of statements in the House and the media to the effect that all documents that were responsive to the committee's motion of May 16, 2012, had been produced.

Approximately two weeks ago, I was notified that officials at the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority would be undertaking a second search because they had determined that there was a possibility that some documents had been inadvertently missed in their initial search. As the minister has just informed the House, there was no political involvement in either the original or secondary searches. They were directed and executed by the ministry and the Ontario Power Authority.

Late last week, I was advised that the ministry and the Ontario Power Authority had identified and would immediately be delivering an additional package of responsive documents to the Clerk of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I shared the honest belief of all government members at the time that all documents had been produced to the Legislature on September 24, 2012. I would therefore like to correct my record and assure you that any incorrect statements that I made in this House were made inadvertently and unintentionally. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The third party government House leader, the member from Timmins—James Bay, on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I'm not so sure how that corrects the record. The facts are what they are, so I would ask that you take this for what it was: It was a statement other than what it was intended to do, and I guess my biggest question now is, is the Premier about to make a third—are we about to hear the Premier giving us a similar type of statement?

This in no way changes the facts. This in no way changes the record. This is strictly a statement on the part of the government, and quite frankly, the opposition should have been made aware when these documents were available—that were rumoured to be available. We should have been made aware.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order.

I recognized both members under the premise of correcting a record. It took a while. It got to that point. There was a comment to make regarding changing or correcting the record, and every member has that right and opportunity to do so.

The House leader for Simcoe—Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to echo what the House leader for the NDP has just said. Clearly those were ministerial statements and should have been done during that period of time, so we want that on the record; and clearly, now that the Minister of Energy has tried to clear the air and the government House leader has tried to clear the air, I think we'd all agree that it's time for the Premier to get up and do the same, because he said the same statements in this House, that all the documents were delivered, and clearly all the documents were not delivered.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

I thank the member. I would also now provide an opportunity to introduce our guests.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to introduce Paul Boulter. He's the father of one of our new pages, James Boulter, and a great community fellow who puts lots into our community. I'd like to welcome him to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you Merle Koven and her granddaughter Stella Koven, who are here to visit Queen's Park from Kingston today.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd like to introduce the family members of Oshawa page Danielle DeWilde: Pam DeWilde; John DeWilde; Janny DeWilde; Chris DeWilde; Sharon Watkins; Don Watkins; and Phil Reinders. Welcome.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Please join me in welcoming students from St. Augustine Catholic High School from the great riding of Oak Ridges—Markham.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce to you today Cindy McCarthy, Julie Garner, Susan McGovern, Patrick McManus, Stephen Sell, Sean Reid, Greg Richardson and Don Del Vecchio, who are here today representing members of the Ontario Construction Employers Coalition—and there are some tradespeople as well.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I rise today to introduce my mother, who is in the members' gallery, Sesh Damerla.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome Tanya Fox-Swan, who's the mother of one of our new pages, Olivia Fox.

I'd also like to welcome long-time friends of mine, and former colleagues at Quinte Broadcasting, Lorne and Jody Brooker, sitting in the west members' gallery.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce my greatest campaigner and my greatest fan, my wife, Janet MacLaren.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in order to achieve great things, you'd set bold

goals. The Ontario PC caucus has done so to make Ontario the best place in all of Canada to find a good job, the kind of job that will give you middle-class security. We put on the table bold ideas like creating 200,000 jobs in the skilled trades.

I'd ask the Premier, given that 600,000 women and men woke up this morning with no job to go to, will you accept our plan that will put 200,000 men and women to work today in the skilled trades—carpenters, welders, electricians? Will you take up our plan, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm delighted to see that my honourable colleague is putting forward some ideas. Unlike the NDP, at least the PCs are putting forward some ideas. They're the wrong ideas, but they're ideas nonetheless.

In particular, they're built around the notion that if we cut our taxes in Ontario by \$5 billion at a time when we're running a \$13-billion deficit—they somehow feel that this is progressive, positive, thoughtful, responsible and intelligent. It is none of those. We've seen that movie before, Speaker. Ontarians have no interest whatsoever in any kind of a sequel. They want positive, balanced, responsible planning when it comes to the economy. That's what our plan to eliminate the deficit is all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: You know if you want to balance the books, you need to do two things: First, you stop the digging; and then second, you need a growth plan, a jobs plan. I am proud of and stood with the Ontario PC deputy leader and brought forward *Paths to Prosperity: An Agenda for Growth*—15 bold ideas to put Ontario back to work again, to make us a leader in Canada.

I'm going to focus on one in particular here, Premier. We have with us the coalition of construction employers, representing 4,000 employers in our province and 100,000 skilled tradespeople. They have suggested, and we agree, that the College of Trades is an unnecessary bureaucracy. You have given it the right to impose a new tax on tradespeople and on small businesses, and it limits access to the workplace.

Our point of view: Stop the trades tax and abolish the College of Trades to help us create 200,000 jobs in the skilled trades. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No government has ever done more to employ construction people in the province of Ontario than this government—no government.

Speaker, our infrastructure plan at present calls for us to spend, this year alone, about \$11 billion; contrast that with the federal government, which is spending about \$6 billion for the country as a whole. Some \$11 billion this year, Speaker; in fact, it's \$35 billion over the course of the next three years. Each and every year we're creating over 100,000 construction jobs as a result of the investments that we make in capital projects.

If my honourable colleague wants to do something about construction jobs, he should support our plan to invest in infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Of course we do not support your plan to take us to a \$30-billion deficit; that's going to cost us jobs.

Let me give you another aspect, Premier. Again, this is supported by 4,000 employers across the province representing 100,000 skilled trades workers, and that's to take our apprenticeship ratios out of the 1970s, out of the era of bell-bottoms, and bring them into the 21st century where they belong and move to a one-to-one journeyman-to-apprentice ratio.

Our plan is to create more jobs for people who want to be in the skilled trades: electricians, welders, plumbers, machine shop operators. We support handymen and handywomen across the province of Ontario. These are good, well-paying, middle-class jobs. If you want to create 200,000 jobs in the skilled trades like we do in *Paths to Prosperity*, Premier, you move to a one-to-one journeyman-to-apprentice ratio like every other province has done.

Will you take up our plan and help pave the way for more well-paying jobs in the province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We are proud of the fact that we are going to be the first province in Canada with its own independent body of colleges, a college for trades. We are proud of the fact that we have doubled apprenticeship opportunities in Ontario.

If my honourable colleague is so interested in creating jobs, he needs to answer this question: When he cuts that \$5 billion in taxes and when he lays off thousands and thousands of public servants, how does that contribute to employment opportunities in the province of Ontario?

We've got a better approach. We're going to freeze public sector wages; we are going to protect public sector jobs; and we're going to protect public services for Ontario families.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, when did you first learn that 20,000 documents related to the cancellation of gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville were kept hidden from members of the assembly? When, Premier, did you exactly learn that fact?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There has been much—and I fear there will be much more—innuendo coming from the opposition on this matter, but I think what we owe Ontarians are the facts.

Here are the facts: Ministry of Energy and OPA officials released documents on September 24, believing in good faith those documents fully satisfied the committee's request. Subsequently, those same officials concluded there was a possibility that additional documents should have been released. That was brought to the minister's attention. He expressed his strong disappointment. He instructed officials to get it right and get it done. That led to the production of the additional documents. All the documents produced were selected by ministry officials

and OPA officials, not by political staff. Those are the facts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, that's avoidance of my question, and it says something about this Premier and his attempt to continue to hide information from members of the assembly, but most importantly, from the taxpayers who are being hit with a billion-dollar bill.

1050

I asked a very specific question, Premier. The Minister of Energy just moments ago said he found out, I believe he used the term "a few days later," after September 24 that there were more documents to come. You, on October 2, said all the documents were here.

So, Premier, I'm going to ask you: Exactly at what point in time did you find out that there were documents that had not yet been submitted to the Clerk, to the assembly or the committee? What was the exact date that you were briefed on this?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think the facts, as distinct from innuendo and allegations and speculation, are important, Speaker. I think we should revisit the facts because those would be helpful to Ontarians, if not to my honourable colleagues opposite.

Officials, and only officials, were involved in the selection of documents to meet the committee request, Speaker. They did their very best the first time around. It came to their attention—the attention of the officials—that there may be additional documents that should have been included in the first round. When this was brought to the attention of the minister, he expressed his profound disappointment. He asked them to get it right and to get it done. The officials conducted yet another search. They came up with more documents. We've made those documents public, Speaker. That's the beginning, the middle and the end; those are all the facts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, the Premier strangely continues to avoid a very simple question. We did have the Minister of Energy and the House leader stand up and say when they found out. I was surprised; I thought the Premier would stand up and apologize to Ontario families and take responsibility for his actions. He failed to do so.

This is the third time I'm asking you, Premier: When exactly were you informed that there were more documents yet to come? Let me tell you why this is important. We're not only talking about you intentionally hiding information from members of the assembly. We're talking about the energy sector and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's the second time I've heard that, and it's tightrope walking in an area. I want the member to be aware that I'll be listening carefully, but I would ask him to move away from that line.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker.

Premier, this is about the energy system of the province of Ontario that requires billions of dollars of investment. It's a prime indicator of our attractiveness for investment and for job creation, and you have turned it on its head in order to keep information that has not been made public. You refuse to answer basic questions.

This is about jobs. This is about the future of the province of Ontario. This is about trust in the basic infrastructure—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —that government is supposed to provide in the province of Ontario. Premier, why won't you come clean? Tell us what you knew and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm more than delighted to speak to the big picture. Speaker, from 2003 to the end of our long-term energy plan, we are investing over \$1 billion and rebuilding an electricity system that they neglected. Their plan, you may recall, was to put in place temporary diesel generators, Speaker. We have rebuilt capacity at Niagara Falls. We have invested in 17 new gas plants. We are refurbishing our nuclear plants. We have thousands of clean energy projects under way. We are driving hard on energy conservation, and along the way, we're building the most aggressive clean energy industry in all of North America, creating some 20,000 new jobs so far. That's our full record on energy in the province of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. I'd like to remind everybody that I did get to the point where I'm going to be identifying individuals from their riding, and I am going to do that. Bring it down.

New question?

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. On Friday, the people of Ontario saw, once again, that the facts their government had given them about multi-million-dollar electricity decisions were not accurate—not even remotely accurate. Where does the Premier think responsibility should lie for this: with himself or with the Minister of Energy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Energy has made it very, very plain that he was very disappointed in the fact that the culling the information for—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —meeting the committee's request was less than thorough. It was less than what we all wanted it to be.

On the basis of that, we believe, Speaker—in fact, we know—that the officials acted in good faith. They went

back; they provided us with more information. We've made that available to the public.

I think it's important to understand that the minister, throughout this, acted in good faith. We have every reason to believe that the officials, throughout this, acted in good faith. We have made this information available at the earliest opportunity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On September 24 the Premier said, "We provided all of the documentation in question and now the opposition intend to ride off on this for some reason unbeknownst to me."

Does the Premier agree that he made that statement, not his minister, and that it wasn't even remotely an accurate statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think we can all talk about allegations and innuendo and speculation, but I think facts remain important in this House. I think they're certainly important to the people of Ontario. Here are the facts—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew is now—second time. That means one more.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Ministry of Energy and OPA officials released documents on September 24, believing—they did, as we did—in good faith that those documents fully satisfied the committee's request. Subsequently, those same officials concluded—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Oxford, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —there was a possibility that additional documents should have been released. When this was brought to the minister's attention, he said, "Get it right and get it done." That led to the production of additional documents.

I want to make it clear to my honourable colleagues opposite and to Ontarians generally that the selection of these documents is done by officials and not the political—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier claimed moving the Oakville plant would cost the public \$40 million. Then, internal documents added at least another \$200 million to the cost, and then an independent expert pegged the cost at about \$700 million.

Is the Premier of this province prepared to take personal responsibility for any of the figures cited?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, a few things: First of all, again, I want to thank the leader of the NDP for her support when it comes to relocating these gas plants. It's important that we bring a unanimous approach to listening to communities when they express genuine, reasoned concerns on this kind of a thing, and I'm very grateful for the support we received from the NDP.

On the matter of the cost, Speaker, it's \$40 million. But what would be helpful would be to receive the cost-

ing from the leader of the NDP as to what they estimated the cost would be, given their decision to relocate the plant as well. Ours is \$40 million, Speaker; we've nailed that down. I'd be interested to see exactly what their costs are.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier should know by now that New Democrats don't support any private power deals, and we certainly don't like to ignore communities.

My next question is for the Premier. The Premier will note that I haven't necessarily called for the resignation of the Minister of Energy today because I don't believe that that would change one iota the poor decisions that this government keeps making when it comes to our electricity system or this government's bad habit of putting their party ahead of what's good for the people.

It's clear that this mess rests clearly at the feet of the Premier. Is he ready to take some responsibility? Is he prepared to appear before the committee studying this matter and finally let all of the facts, regardless of whether it's in his own partisan interests, come to the fore?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we're going to be staying focused on those things that Ontario families want us to stay focused on. I'll let my honourable colleagues engage in whatever it is they choose to engage in, but we've got a job on our hands and we should be working together when it comes to strengthening our economy. That means we've got to eliminate the deficit, and an integral part of that is freezing public sector wages.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: So we've been very, very courteous to my colleagues opposite. We have yet to introduce a bill. What we've done is given notice to my colleagues opposite about a way that we could come together and freeze public sector wages. We have yet to receive any support in that regard, but if we were to do that together we would go a long way toward eliminating the deficit and putting the Ontario economy in a stronger position. That's a matter that Ontario families want us to focus on, Speaker, and that's why we're focused on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's clear that the Premier is focused on avoiding responsibility. It's clear that he had a central role in this and he needs to take some responsibility.

1100

On May 25, 2011, a senior bureaucrat wrote, referring to the Oakville plant, "The government cancelled the contract and communicated that ... to TransCanada before the Minister of Energy was advised."

The bureaucrat went on to say in this particular document that this came straight from the Premier's office.

The Premier made the decision. The Minister of Energy didn't even know what was going on, Speaker.

Will the Premier acknowledge this mess came directly from his office, show up at committee and give the people of Ontario, who are now stuck paying the bills, some explanation and an apology?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, Speaker, in the matter of gas plants in Ontario, we've built 17. Two of those we did not get right. And again, I want to acknowledge the support that we've received from both opposition parties on the matter of those two gas plants, and their strong representations made in many quarters that we relocate those gas plants, which is in fact what we're doing.

But if I might speak again to the big picture for a moment: We just came through our hottest summer on record. I'd ask you to compare our electricity circumstances this summer with those that we inherited back in 2003. Back then, we just nursed ourselves along; we just got by. This year, there was no question whatsoever of our ability to meet all the demand, and we did it in the cleanest way we've ever done it in the province of Ontario. Coal-fired generation is down by 90% in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, one thing is clear: The Premier has left a huge mess for the people who pay the electricity bills in this province. They were told that private power deals would lower bills and take the politics out of electricity. Instead, Ontario families have the most expensive electricity in the country, and the Premier let his campaign team cut private power deals without even telling the energy minister.

Leadership means taking responsibility. When will the Premier show some leadership, instruct his team to stop the delay tactics and actually let that committee get started, and make it clear that he will appear at that committee, and when he appears at that committee, he will apologize for this mess and the sorry state of our electricity system?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, so we're all clear: My honourable colleague is opposed to nuclear energy. She's opposed to wind turbines. She's opposed to gas plants. She's opposed to coal. I gather she's opposed to energy of any kind. It would be nice if we didn't have to produce electricity in the province of Ontario, but actually we live in the real world and we've got to find a way to do that.

I'm proud of the way that we've been advancing. We are shutting down coal-fired generation in Ontario. We are enhancing the supply that comes from renewable sources. We're expanding our capacity at Niagara Falls and another location in northern Ontario. Gas plants are in fact cleaner than coal-fired generation, and we continue to refurbish our nuclear plants. That gives us clean, emissions-free electricity, Speaker. Reliability is up, clean air is up and jobs are up as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Simcoe—Grey.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: Through you to the government House leader: A little more than two weeks ago, when we challenged the government on the release of its original tranche of documents, the government House leader said the following, "I have here two official documents that have been tabled with the Legislature. Those documents are signed ... by the head of the Ontario Power Authority, and ... the Minister of Energy, stating that every document requested has gone forward.... I come from a tradition that believes that when a member of the Legislature says something in the Legislature, that is the truth.... I ask them to stand up and furnish proof or evidence, if not, to shut up...."

Mr. Speaker, in light of 20,000 additional documents the government shamelessly released late on Friday, can the government House leader assure us now that we have all the documents? Or can we expect another document dump next Friday?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the comments that I made in the Legislature that the honourable member quotes from—I corrected my record earlier today.

But I think the easiest way to understand the situation is to quote the letter from Colin Andersen that was sent to the committee last week on Friday: "On behalf of the Ontario Power Authority, I would like to apologize to the members of both the estimates committee and the provincial Legislature. It was always our intention to provide all responsive records and respect the ruling of the Speaker. Our initial efforts fell short...."

"Our due diligence on the September 24 disclosure revealed the need to search additional terms and OPA employees' mailboxes."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: "We then moved expeditiously to notify the clerk of the estimates committee and to produce the additional records. This yielded an additional 7,570 pages. During this process we also discovered a variance in the approach used by the OPA and the Ministry of Energy in assembling the records already disclosed. A further 6,365 responsive pages were subsequently identified."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again, to the government House leader: Mr. Speaker, this government has been caught red-handed as being in direct contravention of your order and an order of this House to produce all of the documents. What we can say without reservation is that the new tranche of 20,000 documents is again missing entire chains of correspondence between political staff and ministry officials, not to mention that once again the documents tabled on Friday are heavily redacted or whited out. While the government can scapegoat bureaucrats and throw them under the bus like they did to the energy minister, we know that this is not a bureaucratic or research mistake, and that this is deliberate and orchestrated on behalf of the government.

All of the documents have still not been released, so I ask the government House leader the following: First, to stand in his place today and apologize to this House for repeatedly saying that all documents were in fact tabled when they were not; and secondly, that he undertake to direct all staff to produce all documents—and when I say all, I mean all remaining documents—unredacted, complete and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, in the same spirit, I'd like to quote from the letter sent by the Deputy Minister—the ministry's search to identify was sent last Friday to the estimates committee.

"The ministry's search to identify—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: "—and produce all documents responsive to the May 16, 2012—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford, second time.

Hon. John Milloy: "—motion was conducted in good faith with every intention to comply with the committee's motion. No responsive information or documents were deliberately withheld from the September 24 package. However, after tabling the documents, I became aware of potential omissions in the ministry's original search, and I immediately initiated a review."

I go to later in the letter: "Second, questions have also been raised about apparent redactions from certain documents in the September 24 release. In the interest of creating a complete disclosure package, early drafts of certain documents, such as slide decks, which were not yet complete and comprised of blank sections, were included in the release. The only redactions in the September 24 disclosure package and the documents attached—"

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. On September 27, 2012, the CEO of the Ontario Power Authority contacted the Clerk to say there were potentially more documents that hadn't been released. Why did it take more than two weeks to admit that there were documents that were still being hidden and then release them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I want to start by saying that I deeply regret that when the 36,000 pages were released, they did not contain all of the documents. I know there were good-faith efforts that fell short by the OPA and the ministry. When, on or the about the 27th,

the chief executive officer of the OPA indicated to the Clerk that there were potentially more, my determination was that they should do whatever they had to do, get the search done, get it right and provide all the documents that responded to the motion. They did that on the 12th of October.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, the minister didn't answer the question, so I'm going to go back to you. The Ontario Power Authority was supposed to be an independent, arm's-length agency. It's clear this government has treated it as yet another tool to advance its political objectives. Did the Ministry of Energy at any point, before or after the release of these thousands of additional documents, provide the Ontario Power Authority with direction on what documents should be released and when they should be disclosed?

1110

Hon. Christopher Bentley: No, Speaker, and that is outlined in the letters by the Ontario Power Authority. Both the Ontario Power Authority and the ministry—the non-partisan public service side of the Ministry of Energy—directed their searches. They decided what documents should be disclosed. The letters speak to that very clearly. When the chief executive officer of the Ontario Power Authority realized that there were potentially more, he advised the Clerk. They conducted a very extensive search. It concluded within hours of the release of the documents on October 12—searches that were directed by the OPA and the Ministry of Energy, free of political direction.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Every day, thousands of children across Ontario travel to school on school buses. We can all agree that we have to ensure that our kids remain safe, and that means making sure all drivers know and obey the rules regarding road safety on school buses.

Today marks the start of School Bus Safety Week. Can the minister tell this House what is being done to keep our kids safe on their way to school and on their way home?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Glenora—Prescott—Russell for the question. The safety of our children on their way to and from school is our top priority. I am proud that Ontario has the safest roads in North America. Every weekday, about 800,000 students travel to school by bus, and that's why it's so important that motorists know and follow the rules whenever they see a school bus on the road.

School Bus Safety Week is an annual event that starts today. It helps educate motorists on the importance of coming to a full stop when approaching a stopped school bus with its upper red lights flashing. We want to warn drivers of the dangers involved in passing a stopped bus.

The law is clear: Drivers and vehicle owners can be charged up to \$2,000 if their vehicle illegally passes a

stopped school bus. It's the law. It's laws like this that keep our kids safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you to the minister for the update. I'm glad to hear that we're taking strong action when it comes to the safety of our children.

I know that road safety partners like school bus drivers and other school staff are key players in road safety as well. Minister, can you tell us about the work we do with our partners in school bus safety?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Again, our top priority is ensuring the safety of the 800,000 students who ride our buses each school day. In fact, travelling on a school bus is 16 times safer than travelling in a motor vehicle. We have that record because of the hard work of our excellent bus drivers and school staff, who work hard on over 18,000 buses to ensure that students arrive at school and get back to their homes safely.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the drivers and staff for their help in making our roads safer for students. We work closely with schools, our road safety partners, police services and school bus companies across Ontario to promote school bus safety, and we thank them for all their great work.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, you assured members of this House—in a sworn, written oath, no less—that all documents related to power plant cancellations had been turned over. Yet the Premier, the House leader, you and 30 members of your caucus continued to state that every document was delivered even after you knew that they weren't.

We put up with the smug comments, the fake moral indignation, the mocking: all to keep us from getting to the truth. You're still going through great pains to keep us from seeing all the documents. Fess up now. No more games, no more nonsense. Tell us what you're hiding. Salvage some semblance of dignity and order all the documents to be turned over before you tender your resignation.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It was my belief, it was the belief of the OPA and it was the belief of the Ministry of Energy that all of the documents that were released responsive to the committee's motion were released with the original 36,000 pages. When it became clear to the OPA and to the ministry that there may be an additional search required, they did that, and all of the documents responsive to the motion that they found were released on the 12th.

I want to very clearly indicate, Speaker, that I stand by the letter and that I believe the letter I sent to the Clerk to be true. I've been advised by ministry staff that the documents attached to the letter comprise all documents responsive to the committee's request, regardless of privilege or confidentiality. I want to further state this—the government House leader has spoken to his issue—none of my colleagues and no member of this House was ad-

vised by me any differently about the documents released on the original day until October 12.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Minister, we've been through this movie before. You tell us one thing, but the facts are completely opposite. You have all the documents—oops, here's 20,000 more, but still no document from the Premier, his staff, the former minister or yourself, for that matter. We shouldn't need a bloodhound and a flashlight to find these documents, Minister. It should be all there in black and white. Instead, we're getting blackouts and whiteouts.

I ask you again, what are you hiding? Minister, no one believes you anymore. You're through here. You're done. There's no credibility left for you or your government. Resign today.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: My colleague's question arises out of the release of additional documents, a release that resulted from the efforts of the OPA and the ministry to find all responsive documents to the motion. The non-political directed the search. The non-political decided what was in and what was out. The non-political have indicated in here that nothing relevant was redacted. Those decisions were made by them. The documents were released. It has always been my intention to comply with the Speaker's ruling, and their good-faith efforts to make sure that the compliance—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A question to the Premier: The committee that's tasked with examining the decision to cancel the gas plants and examining why the government has consistently hidden documents has a short window to complete its work. The deadline to report back to the House is November 19, a little over a month away. The members of the committee have called for an immediate meeting, but government members are using delay tactics to drag the process out. Will the Premier tell his members to stop the delay tactics and political games and let the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock.

Contrary to what some people might even think, I've been trying to listen very carefully on how the questions are put and how the answers are coming. We're now starting to move into the application of what the committee's work is, and I'm concerned that that question be put in a different way. You cannot start to talk about how the committee is going to function.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Sorry, Speaker. You want me to re-put the question?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Briefly.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Will you let the committee go forward immediately? What are you doing to hold it up?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think members of the Legislature are aware that the terms under which this

committee was set up are spelled out in the standing orders. I am confident that the Chair of the committee as well as the members of the committee will work together to make sure that the hearings start within a time period outlined in the standing orders, and hold the hearings in relation to the motion that was passed by this Legislature.

But again, Mr. Speaker, to go back to several weeks ago, after having heard now over nine years the NDP going on and on and on about limiting debate, to have that member, who stood in this place and stifled debate on a motion and government efforts to have a committee seized with the important issue of how do committees balance information—I find that a little rich, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, we've had 20,000 more documents put on the table. November 19 is coming at us very quickly. We need to convene and we need to convene now.

You have some influence in your caucus. Can you move things forward and make sure this committee meets now?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the standing orders have not changed in the last few weeks. When the opposition moved the motion, they knew what the standing order rules were and the timeline in which the committee would sit, and the November 19 date was chosen by the opposition. So maybe the opposition should have got together and come up with a different motion to put forward.

The fact of the matter is, we debated this motion in the Legislature. We came forward with an amendment, which we filed with every member of this House, an amendment which would have asked the committee to undertake very valuable work, and that member, despite over 10 years of listening to the NDP go on about never wanting to limit debate in this Legislature, stood in his place with his colleagues and stifled debate on an important motion, an important matter for this Legislature.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I often hear from my constituents that more affordable housing is needed in Ontario, and I'm sure my colleagues are hearing the same from constituents in their communities. Ontarians want to be sure that we're working to help families who are less fortunate and need help keeping a roof over their head.

I understand that our government made an announcement last week regarding the creation of new affordable housing in the Donlands area of Toronto. Could the minister tell us more about this announcement and how it will help ensure that more Ontarians have access to safe and affordable housing in Toronto?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, who is an advocate

for social justice. He knows how important affordable housing is to people in his constituency, across the city and across the province.

Last Thursday, I was joined by my colleague the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to announce that, following the completion of the Pan/Parapan American Games in 2015, the athletes' village will be transformed to include 253 affordable rental units and up to 100 affordable ownership units.

Along with those affordable housing units, these new buildings will provide 882 jobs in the construction sector. These buildings, these units are very important because they are one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom units. I think everyone who knows about affordable housing knows that finding those larger units is important.

I was very happy to be able to announce that these units will be owned and operated by the Fred Victor mission and Wigwamen Inc., two fantastic organizations. We're happy to be able to work in partnership with them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It is great to hear that our government is making important investments in affordable housing projects like this one here in Toronto. I'm sure it will go far in helping to benefit both the community and the people who live in those new housing units. We know that our government has made investing in affordable housing in Ontario a key priority with this announcement.

Toronto is benefitting from additional housing units, but we need to ensure that communities all across the province also benefit. Can the minister tell this House what our government is doing to ensure that people living in communities all across the province have access to affordable housing?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hear the NDP harping that we haven't done enough. What I would suggest is, they should be supporting these investments. They should be supporting the \$2.5 billion that we have put into affordable housing. They should support the 270,000 units of affordable housing that we have put in place for families across the province. We have worked in partnership, as I said, with Fred Victor, with Wigwamen Inc. and with Dundee Kilmer Developments to show what can happen when government works with organizations that are committed to providing housing.

Where we're at now is we need that other partner, the federal government, to work with us. We know that the money that has been invested will—there will be no more money after 2014. We have a plan up to 2014. We need the federal government to be working with us. I call on the parties opposite to talk to their federal cousins and come to us and work with us so that we continue to make those investments that particularly the NDP should be supporting.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, I've

been working with dozens of construction associations across Ontario this year, and they are unanimous in agreeing that your College of Trades is a huge, expensive barrier to job creation and growth.

Your communications plan around the College of Trades is a dismal failure. I, along with the Ontario Construction Employers Coalition and other key stakeholders, have had to inform thousands of men and women, because neither you nor the college has informed them, of massive taxes they are facing, and they see absolutely no benefit to the youth of our province who are desperately trying to find work. In fact, most people say that too many youth are sitting watching, playing Nintendo.

Minister, can you explain to representatives of the Ontario Construction Employers Coalition, who are here today and who represent over 4,000 Ontario companies and 100,000 employees, and other key stakeholders as well—many of them—why you continue to support the College of Trades? It's nothing but a boondoggle and you know it is.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I don't think it's young people who have been playing too much Nintendo; I think it's the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I continue to be perplexed, waiting for the apology from the party opposite for, in 60 years in government, it failed to have an apprenticeship strategy, saw the slowest growth in apprenticeships in Canada, and were smugly happy with 17,000. We are now at 30,000 apprenticeships per year, and we are ahead of schedule, exceeding the number of apprenticeships that the economy can absorb.

Mr. Speaker, what a remarkable economy it is. There are 47 office and residential towers going up in my constituency alone. It speaks to the outcomes of this government's economic development policy, because there are jobs.

I will challenge the member opposite again: Where's the beef? Show me the numbers for the 200,000, because they're nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: While I wasn't playing Nintendo, I was at 75-some meetings, and most people in Ontario have no idea who you even are. I don't think you understand the groundswell of opposition that is growing against your College of Trades. The new trades tax is not going over well, and now thousands of businesses and employees are saying they will treat their fee invoices as another McGuinty tax. In fact, the only person I found that likes it is Pat Dillon.

Minister, you must know by now that this is nothing but another McGuinty boondoggle that has the potential to cost Ontario workers hundreds of millions of dollars a year with this College of Trades.

Minister, will you follow the advice and plan of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, as announced in our white paper *Paths to Prosperity: An Agenda for Growth*, and scrap the College of Trades once and for all?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm still waiting to understand. It would cost \$115 million, in the construction boom going on in this province coming out of a recession that is unprecedented, something never achieved by the party opposite in power—the party opposite, and some of your friends whom you quote, had a terrible record on two fronts: one, on apprenticeship completion. We have just had public hearings where we got submissions from all of industry, labour and educators, tabling the records of what they would like. We actually have had four apprenticeship ratios set by the college recently. That's four more than in the decade that they were in power. As a matter of fact, I don't think they even ever approved a single ratio adjustment in probably 30 or 40 years. No wonder the Leader of the Opposition likes to talk about bell-bottoms, because that was the last time those guys looked at the apprenticeship ratios—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. On Friday, 21-year-old Emilia Arthurs's mother and her sister were here at Queen's Park. Emilia lives in Sarnia and is a young woman with complex physical and intellectual disabilities requiring around-the-clock care.

For years, Emilia's family has worked with local agencies and the ministry to secure care for Emilia. Now the family is in a crisis, and they are being told that their 21-year-old daughter will have to be placed in a nursing home. Is the minister going to allow this shameful episode to continue?

1130

Hon. John Milloy: I am of course aware of the press conference that was held here at Queen's Park. I think the member recognizes, as all members of the Legislature do, that a minister cannot comment on a specific case.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, I am aware that there are families who are struggling with children with developmental disabilities, and I want to assure the member and assure all members that our ministry works tirelessly with the family, with community agencies to make sure that they have the care they need and to make sure we put in every effort to make sure that a child or an individual is never left in crisis.

As I say, as the minister, I am not able to comment on this specific case. But I do want to impress upon the member our commitment to work with all families in these situations to make sure that the individual in question receives the care that is most appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but I'm not sure if the minister means wiping his hands of the issue is working tirelessly.

Mother Wilma Arthurs described her decision to give up Emilia as the hardest decision she has ever made. What is happening to this family should not be the fate of any family in Ontario, and it's disgraceful. Even worse, the local Community Living has the capacity to care for Emilia, but they are unable to do so because the minister has refused to do their part.

I ask the minister once again: Will he step up to the plate and work with the community and the Arthurs family to find a real solution?

Hon. John Milloy: As I say, our first priority is the needs of the client. We work very, very closely with local agencies, with the family, of course, and with the individual to make sure that in all cases, we can find a way to provide them with care and make sure that no one is left in crisis.

Despite the tough economic times, I'd remind the member that since 2003, our government has increased money in this sector by about half a billion dollars. Is there more to do? Is there more need out there? Of course there is, and we continue to work to reform the system and we continue to work on individual cases. But I remind the member again, and I think all members respect the fact that as the minister, I cannot comment on a specific case. But I can assure members that on all these cases that are brought to their attention, we work very, very diligently behind the scenes.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. Ontario's auto sector is a vital part of our economy, both across the province and locally in my community. In Mississauga and Brampton, Chrysler is a significant employer, and we were pleased when the CAW and Chrysler reached their agreement and work is continuing at the plant.

We are told that the auto sector is recovering well. Mr. Speaker, can the minister point to some concrete evidence that the auto sector is bouncing back?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd like to begin by echoing my colleague's enthusiasm that a deal, in fact, was reached with the CAW and the auto companies that is both fair to Ontario workers and competitive for the auto industry. That's really good news for each and every one of us here in Ontario because it secures jobs and investment in our auto sector.

We've been North America's leading auto producer since 2004, and production is already up. The auto sector alone supports the jobs of 485,000 hard-working Ontario workers, directly or indirectly. Since the global recession, Ontario's auto companies have created 11,000 more direct jobs, and they've invested more than \$2.3 billion in our auto plants.

According to the Globe and Mail, the "industry's recovery is jumping into a higher gear." Auto sales are

up. This is good news for auto workers and good news for a growing economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Speaker, it is great to hear that the industry is going so strong across the province that production is already higher this year than last year. That is particularly good news for those of us in the House who have auto plants and parts manufacturers in their ridings.

Minister, you mentioned that the industry was jumping into a higher gear. Can you please inform this House how well the industry fared in September auto sales?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to report that last month, Canadian auto sales had their best month of September since 2000—the best in 12 years—and the second-best September on record. Mr. Speaker, that's good news.

Overall, auto sales topped 143,143 vehicles in September 2012, an increase of 6.4% from September 2011, when sales were 134,544. So far this year, we're up 6.6% in year-to-date sales.

The member will be happy to hear that Chrysler saw its 34th straight monthly gain, while Ford was the top vehicle maker in Canada and GM rebounded by 12% after several months of decline. Toyota and Honda are also showing outstanding sales of 22% and 16% increases respectively.

Mr. Speaker, our auto sector is going in the right direction; our economy is going in the right direction. It's good news for Ontario workers and good news for all Ontario families.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Minister of Energy this morning. On Friday, a letter from the CEO of the Ontario Power Authority accompanied the release of 20,000 additional documents about the ongoing scandal in your ministry. In that letter, Colin Andersen states that he informed the clerk of the Standing Committee on Estimates on September 27 that the OPA had additional documents to disclose regarding the Oakville and Mississauga power plants.

When you clearly knew on the 27th, more than two weeks ago, that documents were still outstanding, why did it take you two weeks to do the honourable thing? Why did you allow your colleagues to bring disgrace and disrepute to this Legislature, and when will you end your tenure as the Minister of Energy, do the honourable thing and resign?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: On the 27th, the head of the OPA indicated to the clerk that there was the potential. That's an important fact. The OPA and the public service side of the ministry both conducted a second very extensive search, and within hours of the release of the documents on October 12 they concluded that search.

I want to be very clear: At no point did I tell my colleagues in the caucus or the cabinet—did I tell them, apart from the House leader, who has spoken to this

issue—about the additional search, and at no time did I know what the search came up with. I didn't know the final results of the search until the documents were provided to the House, and I was advised within hours of that happening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that the potential has become reality for the Minister of Energy. We don't believe that the CEO and the OPA would inform the Legislature without first informing you, the minister responsible for this agency.

Last week, Minister—I believe it was on Friday—you spoke with the Toronto Star about ministerial responsibility. Do you remember that? And now this morning you're throwing bureaucrats under the bus. That is unacceptable for a minister of this Legislature. You are shirking your responsibility. You can't hide behind these bureaucrats.

You saw our energy critic, the member from Nipissing, stand here after receiving the first tranche of those documents—36,000 of them—reading from whited-out, redacted pages that clearly had cover-ups on them, and a lot of the information was not available.

We're going to hold you responsible. That's our job as the official opposition. On behalf of the people of Ontario, we're going to do this. But I can't believe that you would throw other members of your caucus and other ministers under the bus. The House minister has stood up several times—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to just spend a second on this concept of ministerial responsibility and quote a very prominent expert. He had this to say:

"The minister is under no obligation to resign for something a civil servant alone has done. This was never what ministerial responsibility meant ... the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, therefore, cannot always mean that a minister must resign for everything that goes wrong in his department."

The member may be interested: That comes from a thesis entitled *Debunking Decision-Making: How Do Governments Decide When Ministers Resign?* It's by one Dr. Rob Leone, the MPP for Cambridge.

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ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, northerners are upset, and rightfully so. It has been brought to my attention that there are MNR employees who are in the outfitters business. Working for MNR gives them the ability to influence the rules in order to restrict access to crown land.

Subsection 39(1) of the Public Lands Act says: "No person holding an office in or under the ministry and no

person employed in or under the ministry shall, directly or indirectly, purchase any right, title or interest in any public lands either in the person's own name or by the interposition of any other person or in the name of any other person in trust for the person without the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council."

Minister, are you prepared to investigate these claims and guarantee equal access to crown land for all Ontarians?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Indeed we are proud of the very open access that all Ontarians have to crown land. It's actually quite remarkable in terms of the reality of that fact. Certainly, with the kinds of accusations I think you're making, it would be important for you to be providing us with some information in that regard because I stand here quite proudly saying that, compared to any other jurisdiction, Ontarians' access to their crown land is virtually unprecedented. When indeed there are any restrictions put in place, it is indeed for the betterment of Ontarians as well in terms of protecting those natural resources that we hold so dear.

But, indeed, if you have specifics, may I say to my colleague and friend, I'd be grateful if you brought them forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, to the Minister of Natural Resources: Every year Ontarians are restricted from accessing more of our natural resources due to MNR putting up restriction signs and tearing up roads. A two-tier system has been created, and worse still, MNR staff are in the middle of this problem.

People in northern Ontario are saying that MNR staff have purchased or leased crown land. Instead of protecting our natural resources, they are benefiting from that land, and they're setting the rules that leave local residents out and advantage others with greater means to pay.

What is your ministry prepared to do to investigate these claims?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, you're making allegations without being specific. One thing we can say is that Ontarians are extremely fortunate to have a free-use policy where people can enjoy all sorts of family activities on our crown lands, such as hiking, biking, camping and various other things as well. When forestry access roads, for example, are built and companies are no longer accessing them, yes, it's always difficult to maintain them all and keep them safely accessible to everyone. Crown land roads are only closed to vehicles, but they do remain open for Ontarians who want to use them for activities.

Again, if I may, this is not the first time, Mr. Speaker, this particular issue has come up in the House. Other colleagues have brought it up. If, indeed, you're making specific allegations, I think they should be brought forward in perhaps a different fashion, but I'd be grateful to hear you talk about it.

Again, we should be proud of the access that all Ontarians have to crown land here in the province of

Ontario, and we're going to continue to work to see that's the case.

BREAST CANCER

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a very serious health care issue in Ontario. Too many women, and some men, are diagnosed with breast cancer every year—almost 9,000 this year alone. About 80% of women diagnosed with breast cancer are over the age of 50, but breast cancer in younger women is often aggressive and more life-threatening.

I know about this first-hand, Speaker, having been diagnosed with a very aggressive form of breast cancer in 2010, and I'm still under active treatment for that. My constituents in Pickering-Scarborough East, particularly women and families affected by breast cancer, are concerned about this deadly disease and want to make sure the government is taking strong action to combat it.

Minister, can you tell us more about what Ontario is doing to fight breast cancer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for having the courage to talk about her own particular experience with breast cancer and other cancers. It means a lot when women will stand up and talk about their experiences.

Applause.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The good news is that Ontario has one of the highest cancer survival rates in the world. We're enormously proud of this, but we know there's more we can do. Regular screening and early detection are key to beating this disease.

The Ontario Breast Screening Program has been providing regular breast screening for women in Ontario for over 20 years. It has screened more than 1.1 million women and it has detected over 19,000 cancers. That means 19,000 women got treatment earlier than they otherwise would have, thanks to this program.

But we're going further. We're expanding the program to include high-risk women beginning at age 30. This means 90,000 more screens over three years. Speaker, it means more lives will be saved. More mothers, more daughters, more grandmothers, more sisters will be alive to share life.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Newmarket-Aurora on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: My point of order arises out of the proceedings today. Both the Minister of Energy and the government House leader confirmed for us that, notwithstanding the fact that they had confirmed that all of the documents had been presented further to your order, the clerk was advised on September 27 that in fact there is a strong potential for additional documents to be tabled.

This House—members of this Legislature—was not made aware of that until October 12. I would ask you, sir:

For 15 days, members of this Legislature were not made aware of important information. Notwithstanding the fact that there is no committee to report to, I would have expected—we all would have expected—that you, Speaker, having delegated the responsibility to the House leaders, that at the very least, the House leaders would have been apprised of that important information. I would ask for your explanation, sir.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I noticed another point of order. Is it the same?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I actually had it in my head and I just had to get it confirmed. If the member's concern is that the Speaker should have dealt with this under my office, the clerk of the committee is responsible for the clerk of the committee and not to report to the House. Therefore, there's nothing out of order in that process, except to say that lately we've been trying to ask the House leaders to work together to provide that information. There's nothing untoward happening, except for clarity purposes, the clerk of the committee reports, and their duty is to the committee itself. What the committee does is it reports to the House, so there's a difference between the two.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful.

I want to hear this point of order and then I'll come back for the purpose of clarity.

The member from Timmins-James Bay on a related point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: For the record, just a couple of things: At the last release of the documents, because there were no committees that were sitting at the time, it was understood that when the documents would be released to the clerks, the House leaders would be advised. I would have hoped that's what would have happened in this particular situation.

The second part is that it's pretty clear from the comments that we got from the government House leader and others today that in fact they knew there was a possibility of documents not being released. There were documents to be released that they were aware of two weeks ago, and I think that's a pretty serious situation. I would ask the Speaker to ponder that, because it might actually be that this government is in further contempt to what the original motion—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): At this point what I want to do is to make sure that I have an understanding of this, and I'll walk through this with you. The point that I just explained to the member from Newmarket-Aurora is just that: There would be a difference if this was directed to the Clerk of the House, and the difference between the two is that if there was that happening, then the Clerk of the House would have to immediately make that available, and my understanding is to the House leaders as well. I think there's some minutia here that we have to make sure that we don't go over. I will allow the member from Newmarket-Aurora a supplementary on that.

Mr. Frank Klees: I do understand that. I believe that all of us do understand this. There is a nuance here that is very important, and the nuance is this: We're all aware that the notice was given to the clerk of the committee, but there is no committee in existence, and so the clerk of the committee has no one to report to. We do believe, however—and we stand to be corrected—that the clerk of the committee would have advised the Clerk of the House of that notification. Once the Clerk of the House has that information, we would expect that the Clerk of the House would advise the Speaker, and because of the structure directed by the Speaker, that in fact then the House leaders would have been made aware.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank you for this, and I'm pleased with the patience everyone is showing in this. I will reserve any other further comment until I evaluate and investigate this to ensure that we're all talking about the same thing so that no one is misunderstanding how the process works within this House and within committees, and under the circumstances that the member described.

The member from Oshawa?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I believe you answered my question. My question was that during points of privilege, when they're brought forward to the Clerk's desk, those points of privilege are distributed to the other parties to ensure they have the opportunity for rebuttals or understanding of what's being discussed in the House. I believe that was answered, although I would hope you would take it into consideration when you're looking at how this issue is resolved.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I thank the member from Oshawa.

Now I believe it's time for the member for Parkdale–High Park.

VISITOR

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a totally different topic, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to introduce—she just got here—my friend from Salt Lake City, Vivian Dowsett. She's visiting us today.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before we lose any other people, I do have a comment to make. I've been saddened in the last little while by comments made, directed to individuals, and some of the hurtful comments that are being—I'm saddened by it. I think we are above that, and I would hope and remind all of us that we need to encourage each other to stay on the course of comments on policy issues and remove ourselves from personalizing this, which I've heard a few times, even today, from all sides. I ask the members for your forgiveness if I sometimes react strongly on some of those issues, because I am absolutely convinced that we can do all of the things we need to do in this House without becoming personal. I offer you that challenge.

There is no further business. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1300.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings on a point of order.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today having given notice that I intend to raise a point of privilege.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of privilege it is.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's in regard to contempt in accordance with standing order 21(c). In my written summation that I provided to you earlier today, Mr. Speaker, I provided you with a brief summary of the situation before us and will now highlight some of the key points of that summation.

On September 24, 2012, Minister Bentley tabled an attestation to the House attached to 36,000 documents which stated, "The documents attached to this letter comprise all"—and I emphasize "all"—"documents that are responsive to the committee's request regardless of privilege or confidentiality."

On October 12, 2012, after being told by the Premier, countless ministers and parliamentary assistants that all the documents had been tabled, the opposition parties received an email from the government House leader's office advising us that more documents pertaining to the committee's request were being released.

This raises two questions, Mr. Speaker. The first issue that I draw your attention to is that it appears that multiple members of the government could have misled this Legislature. The second issue that I raise is that despite your ruling that the Legislature was entitled to all documents that it requested, documents relevant to the committee's request were still withheld from the Legislature by the Minister of Energy, on behalf of the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority.

I'm concerned that some government members' statements could have misled the Legislature regarding the Minister of Energy's compliance with the Speaker's ruling to produce all documents related to the request from the estimates committee that was made back in May.

Back here in the Legislature, parliamentary authorities are unanimous and state that the House may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt. Furthermore, as set out by McGee's Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand, "In order to establish a prima facie finding that a breach of privilege and contempt has occurred, three elements must be present: one, it must be proven that the statements were misleading; two, it must be established that the member at the time knew the statement was incorrect; and three, in the making of the statement, the minister intended to mislead the House." I'm extremely confident that all three elements are present in the case that I'm bringing to your attention today.

First, since September 24, 2012, when the initial set of documents had been tabled, members of the opposition were criticized heavily by government members about our assertions that all the documents had not been tabled. The comments directed at us included some very strong statements from the government House leader when he described the opposition as pursuing “vindictive, gutter politics.”

During the debate on the motion to send the issue to the finance committee, Liberal cabinet ministers and parliamentary assistants insisted that there were no more documents because they’d all been tabled. However, on October 12, 2012, it became clear that these statements were incorrect when 20,000 additional documents were tabled.

Furthermore, in a letter written to the Clerk of the Legislature and attached to the second batch of documents, Colin Andersen, the CEO of the Ontario Power Authority, states, “On the evening of September 27, 2012”—15 days ago—“I notified the clerk of the Standing Committee on Estimates that the Ontario Power Authority potentially had additional records to disclose.”

Serge Imbrogno, Deputy Minister of Energy, also wrote that “after the tabling of the documents I became aware of potential omissions in the ministry’s original search.”

Based on the statements by the deputy minister and CEO of the OPA, it’s evident that the government was made aware of the second batch of documents on September 27, and demonstrates that the comments made by the aforementioned government members after the 27th could have misled this Legislature.

I’d like to highlight two of these statements from the Liberal members. In a press conference held in the legislative precinct that was directed at every member, Premier McGuinty said on October 2, 2012, “The opposition asked for all documents, Minister Bentley released all 36,000 pages.”

Here’s another one: “The Minister of Energy has complied with the request to release the documents; 36,000 pages of documents have been tabled. That work is done; there’s a lot more work to do.” That’s from Deb Matthews, MPP, London North Centre and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, on October 1, 2012.

I highlight these quotes because they were made multiple days after the OPA and the Ministry of Energy found out that they had not tabled all of the documents to satisfy the committee’s request.

The second criterion that must be evaluated is whether the member at the time knew the statement was incorrect. All of the quotes highlighted above were said days after the Ministry of Energy and OPA realized that they did not table all the documents requested. The statements made by the deputy minister and CEO of the OPA make it abundantly clear that the government and its members became aware of these new documents on September 27, 2012.

This criterion is further satisfied by Minister Bentley’s and Minister Milloy’s statements to the Legislature this morning when they indicated that they were made aware

two weeks ago that a second search was being conducted by the Ontario Power Authority and the Ministry of Energy. It’s evident that the government was aware on September 27 that all the documents were not produced. Yet, the aforementioned Liberal members continued to make statements advising the House that all the documents had been produced.

The third criterion that must be satisfied is that the member intended to mislead the House. Based on the actions of previously mentioned Liberal members, I respectfully suggest that their failure to inform the Legislature about the incomplete documents demonstrates a direct intention and could have misled this Legislature.

In criminal law, the *actus reus*, also known as the guilty act, includes the omission to act. Premier McGuinty and Minister Bentley, through ministerial responsibility, and the other members, through their duty to speak the truth in this Legislature, had the duty to immediately inform the Legislature that the documents tabled were not complete. Their omission to inform the Legislature about the remaining outstanding documents from the ministry and OPA demonstrates intent and, in my opinion, could constitute a breach of privilege for misleading this Legislature.

The same principles apply to this House that apply to court, and when an attestation is signed saying that all documents are provided or a member states it in the Legislature, it is expected that that be the truth.

I’m also raising concerns that a breach of privilege for contempt of the Legislature has occurred because not all documents, as per your ruling, were provided to the Legislature on September 24, 2012. In your ruling on September 13, 2012, you stated, “The right to order production of documents is fundamental to and necessary for the proper functioning of the assembly.” You went on to say, “The Standing Committee on Estimates was unquestionably entitled to request the documents sought from the Minister of Energy, and in the end the minister had an obligation to comply with the committee’s call for those documents.”

However, despite your clear ruling, the Minister of Energy still did not properly hand over all documents requested by the committee. It’s important that we stop this behaviour immediately as it shows a lack of respect to the Legislature and its members. To stop this pattern of disrespect, I would ask that you also rule on the Minister of Energy’s most recent actions and whether or not they demonstrate a further breach of privilege.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, you’re the guardian of the spirit of openness, accountability and transparency in our democratic institution. Any ruling other than a *prima facie* case of a breach of privilege in these instances could inevitably lead to more egregious abuse in this Legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member has presented the proper materials, and it is a privilege that has been presented.

I will now turn to the House leader of the third party, the member from Trinity—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Trinity–Spadina, thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The weather might be a little bit better than Timmins—James Bay today.

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Speaker, not with great pride or satisfaction, I get up to speak to this, but this is a rather serious matter. You, as Speaker, have made a decision in this House that documents that are requested by committee members or are requested by this House must be released; those documents have to be made available to all. Under no circumstance is anybody allowed to withhold documents of any type.

As a result of the motion that was passed in this House, the process that we were going through, the government released some 36,000 documents to the clerks of the committees, that were eventually released to the House, the leaders of the opposition parties, saying that this was going to be all of the documents. In fact, we have signed documents from two authorities—the OPA and the Ministry of Energy—that essentially say, “We attest that these are all the documents that exist on this particular issue.” For the better part of two or three weeks in this House, the government continued, through the period of debate on the motion and then through the process of question period thereafter, contesting that there were no more documents.

So if you’re an observer just looking at this thing from the outside, whose word are you going to take? You had the opposition saying there were more documents: “Look, there are holes in the documents, entire parts that are redacted, and emails that point to other documents that don’t exist.” The government, for the period of four weeks, kept on saying that that was all the documents. I remember the government House leader saying something along the line of, “When it’s the minister who speaks the truth, then it’s the truth. In other words, all the documents are there.”

Well, here we are. As of last Friday we found out, first of all, that in fact there were more documents that were being released to the clerk of the estimates committee, that were documents that should have been released initially and, for whatever reason, were not released and were now being released at that time.

We then came to the House this morning, and I was a bit surprised and taken aback when I listened to the government House leader make the point that he knew two weeks ago there was a possibility that there were some documents that were not released at the time of the original release. It seems to me, Speaker, that if the government House leader knew there was a possibility that more documents would be released, then cabinet knew, and if cabinet knew, for sure the Premier of this province knew. There should have been a requirement upon them—because of your ruling—to say, “Listen, there is a possibility more documents will be released. Therefore, we’re going to advise the House, or advise the clerks, or advise the Speaker that in fact we think there might be more documents coming. Stay tuned; we’ll let

you know.” That’s not what happened. The government House leader said, “I knew two weeks ago there were possibly more documents.” Not until those documents were eventually released did the government finally get up and do a mea culpa this morning and say, “Oh, my God. There were more documents. Sorry. We didn’t know.”

It seems to me, Speaker, where we’re at is, the fact of the government knowing there was a possibility that documents existed that weren’t released should have been made public. That should not be information that the government House leader or the government should have sat on and said, “No, I’m not going to give it,” because your ruling was quite explicit—and rulings of previous speakers: Any committee in this House has a right to those documents. The fact that the government knew for two weeks there was a possibility of more documents that were there, it seems to me, says they should have made that information known. I think on that basis you should take a look at this particular—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I’m very glad the minister of—what’s her ministry?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson:—corrections is an expert on this.

I just want to finish on this point, Speaker: The fact is, the government knew there was a possibility that more documents were to be released. The fact is, the government did not advise the clerk of the estimates committee, did not advise the clerk of the finance committee that was constituted at that point, did not advise anybody from the government side that there was a possibility of those documents. Somebody else had to do it, and then the government finally had to come clean. I think, with that, you need to take a look at this particular point of privilege and decide in fact if the scope of the current committee would have to be expanded.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to take this opportunity to respond to the member for Prince Edward—Hastings’ point of privilege, which includes both his written statement which was filed with your office this morning and oral submissions that he just delivered in this House. I’d like to notify you and the House that the government will also be filing detailed written submissions with you and would ask that you take these into consideration as a part of your deliberations. As is the practice, they will, of course, be shared with the opposition.

I’d also like to provide a brief oral submission to you at this time. The Minister of Energy and I rose on a point of order this morning to correct our respective records with respect to a series of statements we made in the House in and around the tabling of documents on September 24, 2012, in response to a motion passed by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012.

As you know, on September 24 approximately 36,000 documents were delivered by the Ministry of Energy and

the chief executive officer of the Ontario Power Authority to the clerk of the Standing Committee on Estimates and the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. It was the government's understanding at that time that all documents that were responsive to the motion passed by the Standing Committee on Estimates on May 16, 2012, had been delivered. This was evidenced by the content of the attestation letters from the Minister of Energy and the CEO of the Ontario Power Authority that accompanied the 36,000 documents.

On this basis I, along with the Minister of Energy and a number of other members of the government caucus, made statements in the House to the effect that all documents that were responsive to the committee's motion of May 16, 2012, had been produced. The statements were made during the course of question period and debate on the motion moved by the member of provincial Parliament for Cambridge in relation to your ruling of September 13, 2012, and your statement in the House on the morning of September 15, 2012.

Approximately two weeks ago, the minister was notified that officials at the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority would be undertaking a second search because they had determined there was a possibility that some documents had inadvertently been missed in their initial search. I also understand that the CEO of the Ontario Power Authority, of his own volition, notified the clerk of the Standing Committee on Estimates that it was possible that an additional package of documents would be forthcoming. From this point in time until the end of last week, officials at the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority directed and executed the secondary search. There was no political involvement in this search.

Late last week, the Minister of Energy was advised that the ministry and the Ontario Power Authority had identified, and would immediately be delivering, an additional package of responsive documents to the Clerk of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, as was stated in the House this morning, I, along with the minister and other members of the government caucus, shared the honest belief at the time the impugned statements were made that all documents had been produced to the Legislature on September 24, 2012. On this basis, the minister and I corrected our records at the earliest opportunity in advance of question period this morning.

Any of the relevant incorrect statements that were made in this House were made advertently and unintentionally by the minister, me and other members of the government caucus referenced by the member for Prince Edward–Hastings in his written statement. As the member has identified in his letter, the test you are to apply in order to find that a *prima facie* breach of privilege exists in relation to an alleged attempt to deliberately mislead the House sets a very high threshold indeed.

There are two key components to a point of privilege related to an allegation of misleading the House. First, the member making the statement must know at the time

that the statement was incorrect. Secondly, the member must have deliberately intended to mislead the House. It is respectfully submitted that neither of these components have been made out. In your ruling of March 29 this year, you confirmed this very point when you said, "The standard of proof demanded is the civil standard of proof on a balance of probabilities but, given the serious nature of the allegations, proof of a very high order."

In the absence of an admission from the member accused of the conduct, there must be clear and tangible evidence of an intention to mislead the House. In the absence of such evidence, a Speaker must assume that no honourable members would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or an honest mistake. No admission has been made and no evidence has been presented as to any intention to mislead the House—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Hon. John Milloy: In fact, both the Minister of Energy and I stood on points of order earlier today to clarify their earlier statements.

I would respectfully submit that this is a clear indication that any earlier statements were honest mistakes. As the Speaker found in his March 26 ruling, attempts by a member to correct the record are taken into account in assessing whether the point of privilege has been made out. I would also point out that the Speaker was clear in his ruling that such attempts to correct the record are not to be taken as evidence of any strategy or intention to mislead the House.

The member for Prince Edward–Hastings included a list of other members of the governing party he alleges to have intentionally misled this House. Those individuals had no personal knowledge of these facts and were simply repeating in good faith assertions that had been made by the Minister of Energy. Again, these statements were, at most, a result of honest mistakes.

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In the absence of any evidence that these members had any personal knowledge of the potential inaccuracy of those statements, and in the absence of any evidence of a clear intention to deliberately mislead the House, I would respectfully submit that no point of privilege has been made out.

As I indicated at the beginning, Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing with you a further written submission on this matter and, of course, as is the tradition and practice of this House, sharing it with the opposition members as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to supplement the point of privilege by the member for Prince Edward–Hastings, especially after what the government House leader has just said.

I want to draw to your attention a case of parliamentary precedent from 2002, when a former Speaker of this Legislature, the Honourable Gary Carr, set out param-

eters for finding a prima facie case of contempt related to a charge of misleading the House. In his ruling on June 17, Speaker Carr stated that to satisfy a charge of contempt for misleading the House, there must be “an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct independently proved.”

In this case, the tangible confirmation is the letters from the OPA CEO and the Deputy Minister of Energy, where they state very clearly that after tabling the documents, they found more documents that were not released. As such, these letters clearly demonstrate the tangible confirmation that the government knew on September 27 that all the documents were not tabled on September 24.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: I also wish to rise on the point of privilege by the honourable member for Prince Edward—Hastings. Contained within the documents are various references to one Mr. David Livingston. Mr. Livingston is the Premier's chief of staff. However, before Mr. Livingston was the Premier's chief of staff, he was assigned as a senior bureaucrat to the Ontario Power Authority, one of the main producers of these documents. It should be noted that in the government's initial partial release of documents, there were countless emails from Mr. Livingston that were, in fact, missing.

What does this mean with respect to the honourable member's point of privilege? Well, it means that Mr. Livingston, as the Premier's most senior political adviser, his chief of staff, who no doubt signed off on the release of the original 36,000 documents, must have known, or at least ought to have known, that the documents and emails he authored while at the Ontario Power Authority were, in fact, missing.

This means that the Premier's chief of staff, potentially unknowingly, sent the Premier out in public to his infamous crocodile-tears press conference and allowed the Premier to once again—publicly and in the House—suggest that all documents were tabled when in fact they were not. This means that the chief of staff to the Premier likely informed the Premier himself that documents he tabled were, in fact, not complete.

I'd like to add those comments to the point of privilege of my colleague from Prince Edward—Hastings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further comment, the House leader from the third party, the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you. I get a second try because of that.

I'm not going to go very long. I just want to make the point, because I think it needs to be made, that the test is, you must knowingly make a statement that is misleading in order to be found in contempt; in other words, you have to be of knowledge.

I think the point here is that the government knew for two weeks, at the minimum, because this is what we get from the statement from the government House leader:

“Approximately two weeks ago, I was notified that officials at the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority would be undertaking a second search because they had determined that there was a possibility that some documents had been inadvertently missed in their initial search.”

It raises the question that they then knew there was actually a possibility of other documents being in existence. It seems to me that your ruling was quite clear: The House and the committees are within their rights to have documents, and that includes, if there's a possibility that documents were available, that fact should have been made known to the House so that everybody had the same knowledge. In this case, the government decided to withhold, in case maybe they could get by and not have other documents—who knows what was going on in the background? But the point is, they knew there was a possibility of documents and did not inform this House, Mr. Speaker, and I think that is a very serious offence of parliamentary privilege.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Speaker. I wish to rise on another point related to this point of privilege as well.

I want to quote from volume 145, section 133, from the third session of the 40th Parliament of Canada, and I quote from Hansard. I quote the federal Liberal member from Scarborough—Guildwood. Again, I am quoting a Liberal.

“Mr. Speaker, if I lie to you or mislead you in a personal relationship, an apology may well suffice, assuming no further harm. However, if you were a judge sitting in a court and I lied to you, there would be consequences regardless of an apology. It is called perjury. I may even go to jail because we have the highest expectations that truth be told in court; so also in Parliament and before a parliamentary committee.”

Speaker, while I cannot say some of these words in this House, the Liberal member from Scarborough had a point. When he was speaking on a point of privilege to a matter of a federal minister misleading the House, these words ring true. Interestingly, if you have numerous members of caucus and numerous members of the cabinet speaking and all saying clearly, in an orchestrated manner, and all suggesting that all documents have been tabled, clearly it is a major problem. It is not only a major problem with respect to the facts; it is a major problem with respect to how information is communicated to this House.

All members are considered honourable, and while this debacle has been blamed on bureaucratic mistakes, it is clear that these matters are orchestrated. If something is orchestrated, Speaker, it is deliberate. If the Premier's chief of staff knew about this information, it necessarily follows that the Premier himself knew. That means if the Premier knew, so did his cabinet. If the cabinet knew, then so did the entire Liberal caucus.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: There can be no other conclusion that this House is being misled, and I call on you to find a prima facie breach—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. While I'm asking for some patience and some quiet during this particular and serious issue, it's going both ways. So let's all just tone it down.

Before I do continue, there has been some language used that is inadvertently there, simply because of the very nature of this particular request. I would also say that it does not allow other comments being made that I'm starting to hear and I will deal with immediately. So keep the heckling down; keep the language proper.

The member will continue.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, Speaker. I am just going to conclude.

There can be no other conclusion that this House has been misled, and I call on you to find a prima facie breach of privilege, Speaker, in this case. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same issue, the member from Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Briefly, Mr. Speaker, I think anyone who has gone through even the original 36,000 documents would realize, as we pointed out time and time again in this House—and we presented blank documents, whited-out documents, blank pages, blank charts; hundreds and hundreds of pages. Anybody since the time the original documents were dumped, all 36,000—anybody looking at them—it would be self-evident that we didn't get all the documents.

Therefore, I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that in every case, whether it be a parliamentary assistant or a minister, in this House when they said they had presented all the documents, they were misleading this House, because it was quite evident, if you looked at the original pile—emails ended halfway through emails; charts were missing; no correspondence from any politicians in the original batch whatsoever; nothing from the Premier's office; no senior political aides in the original batch.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the second batch, a tranche of 20,000 documents, is worse. They've clearly gone through those with even more of a fine-tooth comb, and rather than taking out entire paragraphs, they sneakily go along and you find that every fifth word is missing in some of these emails or selected words are whited out in these emails.

So, right from the very beginning, Mr. Speaker, everyone who spoke on that side of the House, on the government side of the House, who said to us that we had all the documents, was misleading this House.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The same issue?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The same issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. When we now look at the date that the House leader has told us that

they first became aware of the documents—let me read directly from Hansard some comments made after the date was disclosed that they knew more documents were coming. The Minister of Labour: "The documents in their entirety have been provided to this Legislature." The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: "The documents have been tabled. That work has been done." The member from Don Valley East: "We have complied with the Speaker's orders and we've handed over over 36,000 pages of documents...." The member from Windsor West: "They ask for documents; they receive documents.... Details are in the large number of documents that have been released." The member from Ottawa—Orléans: "You have your documents.... He has met the requirements as established by the Speaker...." The member from Ajax—Pickering: "We believe in accountability to those we serve and we take full responsibility for decisions we make." I'll go to the member from York Centre: "The opposition received all 36,000 pages of documents that complied with their request.... The request of this committee for these documents has been satisfied; the matter should be over." The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: "We sent 36,000 pages of documents—so they have it...." The member from York West: "Having provided all the documentation.... We have delivered—the minister has delivered—what they were looking for." The member from Mississauga East—Cooksville: "The opposition received all 36,000 pages.... The request of the committee ... has been satisfied.... These documents were provided to the committee." The member from Scarborough Southwest: "He released the documents.... They were released.... The documents were all put forward." The Minister of Energy basically said, "These are honestly all the documents I have. These are the documents I have." He signed a letter saying, "These are the documents I have in my possession. I think the documents are there. The information has been released." The member from Richmond Hill—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member, I would like you to get to your point because now we're starting to duplicate those issues. If you have any written submissions that just tell me those quotes, then I would take them as well. We need to sum up.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. The point, of course, is the fact that they have now told us that they knew 15 days ago that there were additional documents yet speaker after speaker stood and told us, "You have all the documents." That's the point I'm making.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same point of order?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just for clarity, is it on the same point of order?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, the same point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If it is, I would ask you to be brief and to your point.

The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much. What has been raised here today by my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings is a motion of breach of privilege and the fact that this House was misled by members of the government. That is in fact what we—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. I would ask everyone just to bring it down a bit. I have already indicated that there are going to be moments in which this is going to be discussed in this manner because of the very nature of this issue—but I would like that to be simply mentioned and move on without the interruptions.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know why they get so upset; I guess they're a little sensitive about it. But they have to understand that what is in fact being levelled against them here is that members of their cabinet, members of their government, of their caucus, have misled this House. Now we have the evidence of the statements they've made to the Legislature.

I further say, Mr. Speaker, that I subscribe to the conspiracy theory that this was completely orchestrated to try to minimize the amount of information that the opposition would have access to. In fact, on October 2, the day of the vote on the original motion, the Premier basically threw himself on the mercy of the court, as they say, hoping that people would change their minds and not proceed with this motion.

I contend that had that plea been successful, we would not be seeing any more of this new information. It is only because we, as an opposition—and I thank our fellow members in the third party—stood strong and said no to that plea that, as a result, the government then had to go back to their reading rooms and their thinking rooms and say, “You know what? We didn't win that battle. Now I guess we're caught. We're going to have to go back to the folks at the OPA and the folks in the Ministry of Energy and we're going to have to actually reveal more documents, because we never intended to table these additional 20,000 pages. We were hoping we could appeal to these people in this House and get away with it like we've been getting away with it for nine years.”

But on October 2, in front of the press out there, the Premier in his press conference repeated that all the documents had been turned over—repeated more than once that all the documents had been turned over.

I find it pretty rich to believe and expect that a Minister of Energy or the head of the OPA would be aware of facts that potentially would lead to more documents and would not have informed the Premier and/or the Premier's office. There is a lot more here that needs to be investigated, and that's why this motion of privilege should be adopted by the Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all the members for their contributions, and now I'm beginning to hear the same over again.

I will take under consideration—first of all, I thank the member from Prince Edward–Hastings for his submission, and I thank all the members for their contribu-

tions. I will allow, which we always do, any other written submissions that need to be heard to make my decision, and I would hold that until I have enough time to seriously evaluate this issue.

It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

D.J. KENNINGTON

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to stand and recognize a remarkable accomplishment by one of my constituents from St. Thomas. D.J. Kennington came into the final race of the NASCAR Canadian Tire Series on September 22, needing only a 24th place finish to claim his second series championship title. This proved to be no trouble for the talented driver, as he brought home his number 17 Castrol Edge Dodge in first place at the Pinty's 250 held in Kawartha, Ontario.

This capped a record-setting season for D.J. This final race marked his seventh win of the season, breaking the record for most wins in a season previously set by Andrew Ranger in 2009.

Kennington accomplished another record-breaking feat by winning five consecutive races. Those wins occurred at the Canadian Tire speedway, Delaware Speedway in London, MotoPlex Speedway in BC, City Centre Airport in Edmonton and Riverside speedway in Nova Scotia.

We in Elgin–Middlesex–London could not be more proud of how well D.J. has represented our community across the country. I congratulate him and his pit crew and wish them luck for next year. I also want to wish him well in his upcoming role as a new father, as his wife, Jaime, is pregnant with their first child.

WOUND CARE

Ms. Cindy Forster: Mr. Speaker, a resident and her family from my riding are baffled by the fact that post-surgery wound care treatment strongly recommended by a Toronto surgeon is available to Toronto patients from the CCAC in Toronto but not to patients in the Niagara region, through the HNHBC CCAC.

Alexis MacLean and her husband called me and told me that the Niagara branch of the CCAC told her that the wound care treatment she needs is simply not a service that is available in Niagara, and that she would have to rely on conventional dressing care that requires the use of antibiotics. She was also told that the problem with this treatment is that it will take substantially longer than the recommended medical treatment to heal her wound.

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I'm sure the dedicated RNs and health care professionals at CCAC Niagara are aware of this inconsistency. However, geography, resources and funding seem to be the driving forces for what is available to the people of my riding, and that is simply wrong.

I would ask the Minister of Health to please review the situation and critically assess CCAC services in Ontario. Health care dollars need to be applied appropriately and consistently for the treatment of the people of Niagara using the CCAC, as well as other people in the province.

SENIORS' INFORMATION EXPO

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: A few weeks ago, I held a 50-plus information expo in conjunction with my federal MP, working in a non-partisan way in the interests of our constituents. It was a wonderful expo, with lots of great presentations and information for everyone.

On the second day of the expo, our Central East LHIN CEO, Deb Hammons, provided the audience with a very detailed summary of the investments the LHIN has made to improve the lives of seniors in my riding of Pickering-Scarborough East and across the entire Central East LHIN. These investments include more assisted living spaces for high-risk seniors, with 24-7 on-call support; geriatric assessment and intervention network clinics for our largest hospitals; restorative care programs in our hospitals, so that seniors can regain their ability to care for themselves and return home safely; and the LHIN's nurse practitioners supporting teams, which avert transfers to the ER by placing highly skilled nurse practitioners in the community to support their colleagues in local long-term-care homes.

My constituents appreciated this opportunity to hear from our local LHIN about the great work they are doing, in partnership with local health service providers, to improve and transform our health care.

I'm very pleased that the LHINs are being held accountable to provide these services and the investments they're making, and that monitoring is being done.

I'm very proud to share this information today in the House.

BULLYING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: A year has passed, today, since Jamie Hubley passed away from suicide as a result of bullying. In many ways, things have changed in the last year, and in other ways they haven't.

I think many of us read with sadness, in the last week, about Amanda Todd, a young British Columbian who took her life.

We also look to our federal colleagues, who are now addressing this very issue today in debate.

As Allan Hubley, Jamie's father, said to me earlier today, it's no longer sufficient just to pass laws and to fund further studies. We need to do something about this to give our children hope. We need to stand up. We need to speak.

It compels me to read into the public record today an article from a reporter who used to live in Ottawa, who is now with the *Globe and Mail*. Carly Weeks says, "It's time to recognize bullying is not about a headline or an isolated incident or a tragedy you heard on the news. It is

a problem that affects all of us. There are bullies. There are victims. And there is everyone else watching from the sidelines. It's time for us to take a long look in the mirror. It's time to speak up, say something, and refuse to be the complicit bystander."

I urge all members of this assembly to have conversations in their own community about what we can be doing as parents, as members of this assembly, as neighbours and as friends to simply not be bystanders, but to speak up and to stand up.

EVENTS IN KITCHENER-WATERLOO

Ms. Catherine Fife: This past week, I had the opportunity to celebrate the 44th Oktoberfest in the region of Waterloo, in addition to meeting with many constituents.

This famous festival continues to grow. It attracts thousands of visitors, creates new jobs and continues to generate economic activity throughout the region. At last count, over \$21 million was brought into the region, in addition to \$1.5 million towards not-for-profit organizations and charities. This annual celebration recognizes and shares Kitchener-Waterloo's unique cultural heritage with Ontarians from across North America.

Each year, we also celebrate German Pioneers Day, which provides an opportunity to reflect on the foundations of our community and to remember who worked hard to help make our cities places to be proud of.

At the Oktoberfest parade, for instance, we raised over 15,000 pounds of food for the food bank—we shouldn't need food banks, but we do—and we also raised over \$15,000 that day.

I'm proud to be part of the Kitchener-Waterloo community and indeed proud also to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the city of Kitchener, founded as Berlin.

Kitchener has undergone many important changes, but its roots as a German community still show in outdoor markets, German clubs and our Oktoberfest celebrations.

Congratulations to the Oktoberfest planning committee and the over 2,000 volunteers who made this festival safe and successful for Ontarians and the broader community at large. Prost!

YOUTH SERVICES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: In response to the incidents of violence that took place this past summer in Toronto, our government has come forward with the implementation of a youth action plan. I was pleased to welcome the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Dr. Eric Hoskins, to my riding of York South-Weston last Thursday. He announced at our very own Jane Street Hub that the province will be adding 35 youth outreach workers across Ontario to help young people make positive choices and stay on track.

The youth action plan has sparked an ongoing dialogue with youth in our province. Just this past weekend, I participated in a round table organized by the Toronto Youth Cabinet, and in my riding I co-hosted a town hall

meeting at the end of August, bringing together our three levels of government and special guest MPP Michael Coteau, community organizations and youth to discuss youth services and crime prevention.

I want to thank everyone who took time out of their busy schedules to come out and share their thoughts on how to keep our community safe by helping young people find jobs and succeed.

Mr. Speaker, every young person in our city and our province has the potential to contribute in a positive and productive manner in their community. Every young person must feel valued and be valued. We all have a responsibility to ensure that our youth have access to the right supports and the right opportunities so they can make positive choices and reach their full potential.

NORTH GRENVILLE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a privilege today to add my voice to those in Kemptville and North Grenville celebrating the official opening of the community's new high school. Unfortunately, I can't attend Thursday's ceremony at the new North Grenville District High School, just a few short weeks after the school's doors swung open for the first time to welcome grade 7 to 12 students.

This special event also marks the end of a very long and often trying journey for teachers, parents, municipal officials, community leaders and the Upper Canada District School Board. More than a few times, I'm sure, many of them wondered if they would ever see such a celebration. I know this because as executive assistant to the former Leeds-Grenville MPP, Bob Runciman, I was involved with a number of meetings with these community groups as they moved forward. I can recall vividly emails, meetings, seminars and discussions about this. I have to tell you, Speaker, I admired their tenacity as they fought to convince decision-makers that Kemptville and their former high school, although very grand, just simply no longer served the community in that capacity.

There are so many who deserve credit for the opening of the school, which will allow teachers to deliver a first-class education to students in a safe, accessible and technologically advanced setting.

Today, like the bricks in the new school's walls, everyone who played a part should be very proud to know they are part of something greater than themselves. On behalf of today's students and tomorrow's, I want to join all in North Grenville in celebrating today.

RUSH

Mr. David Zimmer: As rock 'n' roll fans know, last night the band Rush played their first of two hometown shows at the Air Canada Centre.

I want to congratulate Rush on their nomination to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland.

Here's the scoop: Rush was formed 44 years ago by Alex Lifeson and Geddy Lee in my riding of Willowdale. Their rise to fame began when they started playing as a high school band in the local high schools in Willowdale: A.Y. Jackson and Drewry Secondary School. Then Neil Peart joined them and they went on to record 24 gold records, selling 40 million albums.

This summer, Rush released their 19th studio album, *Clockwork Angels*. Critics have called it their very best in years, Speaker.

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And it gets better. This time, for the first time, rock 'n' roll fans can vote on who they think deserves to be inducted into the hall of fame, so I want everybody here and all rock 'n' roll fans to get out and vote for Rush, because as Geddy's maxim goes in his song *Free Will*: "If you choose not to decide, you still have made a choice."

For my constituents and for Rush fans all over the world, and especially my constituents in Willowdale, and indeed all members of this Legislature—congratulations to Willowdale's great rock band, Rush.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can't resist one of my favourite bands. I'll send the Hansard to Rush to say that there was heckling going on. My goodness gracious. Good-hearted, I hope.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no, not now. I get to do those; you don't.

SCOTIABANK TORONTO WATERFRONT MARATHON

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak about an amazing event that happened here in Toronto yesterday. The Scotiabank waterfront marathon attracted over 24,000 participants from across Ontario and indeed from around the world. There were 4,000 people registered for the marathon, 10,000 people for the half-marathon and the rest ran the five-kilometre run.

Even though the weather wasn't the greatest, the air was filled with good cheer and optimism. That was because the Scotiabank run allows you to raise money for your favourite charity, and many groups were represented, from children's aid to autism groups, children's treatment centres and many more. So far, a total of \$2.6 million has been raised, with more to come because pledges can be collected until the end of October.

I had the opportunity to get involved to raise money for one of my favourite charities, the Abilities Centre, Durham, and managed to complete my first half-marathon. It wasn't pretty, and I wasn't the fastest, but I managed to finish in two hours and 22 minutes. But more importantly, our team was able to raise over \$15,000 for our charity. The Abilities Centre is a 125,000-square-foot sports, recreation and arts facility for people of all abilities, promoting inclusion for everyone, and recently it was announced that it is going to be a preferred venue

for the Parapan American Games when they come to Toronto in 2015. The Abilities Centre is on the map.

In closing, I'd just like to thank Scotiabank for putting on this run. It was a great act of corporate social responsibility and a great day for all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I was able to preempt a point of order with that one.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Mr. Naqvi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to encourage participation on matters of public interest and to dissuade persons from bringing legal proceedings that interfere with such participation / Projet de loi 132, Loi visant à favoriser la participation aux affaires d'intérêt public et à dissuader quiconque d'introduire des instances judiciaires qui entravent une telle participation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the house that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: The bill enacts the Protection of Public Participation Act, 2012. The new act authorizes a defendant in a proceeding to bring a motion for dismissal if the proceeding is in respect of a communication or conduct that involves a matter of public interest. The act sets out the test to be considered by a court or tribunal when considering whether to dismiss the proceeding, rules regarding the payment of costs, the procedure to be followed when such a motion is brought, and a right to appeal. In addition, the act includes rules relating to the suspension of related proceedings and qualified privilege.

The bill also amends the Statutory Powers Procedure Act to provide that, except in specified circumstances, applications for orders to pay costs must be made in writing.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

PERSPECTIVES ÉCONOMIQUES ET REVUE FINANCIÈRE

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I rise to present the 2012 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. Monsieur le Président, j'ai l'honneur de vous présenter le document Perspectives économiques et revue financière de l'Ontario de 2012.

I do so at a time when Ontario families are still feeling the effects of the global recession. The world continues to confront challenges brought on by an uncertain economic environment. A number of European economies have fallen into recession, and the situation remains volatile. In many other places, government debt levels are enormous and eclipse those here in Ontario and Canada. The economic recovery in the United States, our largest trading partner, has been slow and burdened by high unemployment. Slowing growth in emerging market economies adds to the global insecurity.

Ontario is directly affected by the changing global economy and the uncertainty that comes with that change, which is why our government is taking strong, determined action for Ontario's economy and job creation. I am pleased to update Ontarians on how the strong action taken by the McGuinty government is working. Les mesures décisives prises par le gouvernement McGuinty sont efficaces. The strong action taken by the McGuinty government has confronted the challenges facing Ontario leading up to and through the global recession. We overcame those challenges by working together. When I say "we," I mean all Ontarians together.

Before the recession, we rebuilt our schools and hospitals after years of neglect by the previous government. Now we have one of the best-educated workforces in the world to compete in the global marketplace of ideas, of products and of services, and a better health care system to help the ones that we love.

Working together, we rebuilt our electricity system because it was aging and unreliable. Now it is stronger, with over 10,000 megawatts of new and refurbished capacity to support our growing economy.

The McGuinty government eliminated the hidden deficit that that party and their government left to this government, Mr. Speaker. Then we balanced three budgets in a row before the global recession hit.

In 2008-09, the global economy experienced its largest downturn since the Great Depression. It affected everyone around the world, people in both advanced and emerging market economies. Again, Ontarians took action to weather that world-wide economic storm, to keep people at work in existing jobs or to put them back to work in new jobs. To do that, the province invested substantial stimulus into the economy. We invested in the auto sector. We invested in forestry and mining. We made considerable infrastructure investments to turn aging infrastructure into opportunities for growth. Ontario took strong action to keep literally hundreds of thousands of people at work. We reformed an outdated tax system to make Ontario more competitive. Now Ontario is one of the most attractive places for businesses to invest, and that investment creates jobs.

Ontarians took strong action during turbulent times to turn the corner on the global recession, to keep our economy on the right track, to create good jobs for people and to build a shared prosperity for current and future generations of Ontario families.

Like many places around the world, Ontario's economy is growing steadily, yet more modestly than we

would like. The province's economic and job growth have both fully recovered to pre-recession levels. Since the bottom of the recession, Ontario's real gross domestic product has increased by 8.1%, and more than 350,000 net new full-time jobs have been created. Since 2003, Ontario has created 565,600 net new jobs. That means an average of 5,200 per month every month, or approximately 172 jobs every day. Business investment in machinery and equipment, which increased almost 19% last year, is a key driver of Ontario's economic growth.

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Mr. Speaker, the facts are clear: There is no place better positioned to grow and take advantage of new opportunities than Ontario is, sir.

Il n'y a pas de meilleur endroit que l'Ontario pour prendre de l'expansion et profiter des nouvelles occasions.

Eliminating the deficit is the single most important step the province can take to grow the economy and create jobs. Our government is on track to eliminate the deficit. For the fourth year in a row, Ontario is ahead of its targets in lowering the deficit.

Pour la quatrième année de suite, l'Ontario devance ses objectifs de diminution du déficit.

We are prudently managing growth in program spending while protecting jobs and public services. Last year, program spending in Ontario grew by less than 1%. That marks the second-lowest rate of growth in program spending in Ontario in a decade. On average, over that decade, Ontario's growth and program spending has been roughly the same as that of the federal government.

Our government is taking strong action because we know that the status quo is not an option. We know that eliminating the deficit will make the economy stronger. We will continue to strengthen and support job creation and protect the schools and health care that Ontarians value. The strong action taken by the McGuinty government is working, yet the fact remains, there is still more to do.

Ontario has made and continues to make important investments in public services. In recent years, when economic growth was robust, these investments included fair pay increases for our public sector workers. We value the important work that public sector workers do for Ontario families, and we want to protect their jobs and the important services that they provide.

One fact keeps things in perspective: More than half of what government spends, over \$55 billion, goes to wages and benefits for employees in the broader public sector. Given the deficit and ongoing economic uncertainty, Ontario faces a very clear choice: Restrain wages and benefits or lay off thousands of hard-working Ontarians, the people who provide the public services relied on by Ontario families. It is fair and reasonable to ask all of our government workers to take a two-year wage freeze so that we can protect public services and, more importantly, save public sector jobs. MPPs are in the middle of a five-year wage freeze.

We recently passed legislation to protect the gains we have made in education. The Putting Students First Act,

2012 is based on an understanding reached with 55,000 teachers after 300 hours of negotiations that took place over six months. Over the next two years, it would support savings of \$2 billion to taxpayers and protect nearly 20,000 jobs in education, both in the classroom and in educational services.

Mr. Speaker, our doctors are back at the negotiating table to help us meet our targets and better serve patients. Just recently, a government union of 10,000 employees has reached a tentative agreement that includes a two-year wage freeze.

Now we want to work with the almost half a million more government workers to negotiate similar agreements. Three weeks ago, I proposed the Protecting Jobs and Public Services Act for consultation. This draft legislation proposed our preferred approach to keep people working and protecting public services. It would protect the jobs of some 55,000 Ontarians and help avoid increased spending in the public and broader public sectors of \$2.8 billion over three years.

Ce projet de loi protégerait les emplois de 55 000 Ontariennes et Ontariens, et éviterait des hausses de dépenses dans les secteurs public et parapublic de 2,8 milliards de dollars sur trois ans.

This is a minority Parliament, as we all know, so the government needs the support of one of the opposition parties.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we briefed both opposition parties. We wrote to them and asked for their support of this initiative to protect public sector jobs. The NDP said no, and they had nothing to offer as an alternative. The PCs said, "Yes, but only if you tear up collective agreements." We disagree with this approach; however, the door opened by the PCs is the only door available to us in this minority Parliament. So we will continue talking to the PCs and working with them while we also look to options outside of the Legislature to deal with this situation.

We have always said we will work with anyone willing to work with us to meet the objective of eliminating the deficit and protecting jobs and public services. That is why we are prepared to sit down with our labour partners and pursue framework agreements. We know it is possible to achieve negotiated agreements when our partners are willing. This has always been, and remains, this government's preference. Cela a toujours été, et demeure, notre préférence.

We took this approach with about one third of our teachers, with 10,000 government employees. In the private sector, we have seen that employers and employees can come together and achieve wage freezes through hard bargaining. It remains to be seen if we can achieve the necessary results with half a million more public sector workers. It is our preference that we do so, and we will continue working to reach that goal.

One way or another, sir, we need compensation restraint as a tool to reach our fiscal targets and protect jobs and public services. The fiscal plan provides no funding

for incremental compensation increases or new collective agreements, so pay hikes could only be offset through job cuts and cuts to public services or tax increases. The NDP appear willing to bury their heads in the sand and accept that. The McGuinty government cannot and will not accept these alternatives. Given the choice between protecting jobs and public services or cutting jobs, which means fewer services, the McGuinty government will choose protecting jobs and those vital public services every single time.

Speaker, the strong action we are taking to eliminate the deficit is working. We are further ahead in lowering the deficit than we thought we would be by now. The province's deficit for 2012-13 is projected to be \$14.4 billion, an improvement of some \$400 million from the 2012 budget forecast. The public accounts of Ontario for last year confirmed a deficit of \$13 billion, which is \$3.3 billion ahead of where we thought we would be at this point in time. Our government will keep working to lower the deficit each and every year until it is completely eliminated.

Sir, the global economy is going through uncertain times. Governments around the world cannot sit idly by and wait for the uncertainty to pass. Here in Ontario, we are restoring confidence, growing the economy, and building prosperity for families brick by brick and job by job. We will continue to hit our fiscal targets and we will continue to transform how we deliver public services to people to ensure the best possible value for the best possible services.

We have taken the steps required to ensure that Ontario's economy is competitive.

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Now, eliminating the deficit is the most important thing we can do to strengthen our economy and create jobs. Long-term prosperity is achieved through job creation and balanced budgets.

La prospérité à long terme est le résultat de la création d'emplois et de l'équilibre budgétaire.

Our competitive economy and a balanced budget are the pathway to continuing to deliver the best education and health care in the world.

Ontario is a strong province with a proud tradition of jobs and economic growth. By taking strong action and making the right choices today, we will continue that tradition and build a better tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's a pleasure to respond, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, to the 2012 fall economic statement.

I will say, off the top, that I had hoped for much better. Minister, with all due respect, it was an unremarkable, unimaginative and unhelpful embrace of the status quo. People in the province of Ontario today, they want to see hope. They want to see opportunity. They want to see jobs. They want to see change. The Ontario PC caucus will fight for hope and jobs and bringing needed change to our province.

It's been a year since the last election, when Ontarians sent a very clear message to this government and this

Legislature: that they wanted to end the overspending and see a focus on private sector job creation again. A year has now passed without progress on either; the hole is deeper, we have lost private sector jobs.

We could have actually used the time to address Ontario's jobs and debt crisis with a comprehensive and integrated plan. Today's economic statement should clearly have been an opportunity to debate action-oriented measures that reduce the overspending that is holding back Ontario's engine of growth, but instead all we got was another set of red ink, another set of excuses, another can kicked down the road.

I want to begin my remarks today to say that I believe resolutely that Ontario can and will lead this country again in job creation. We will be number one again. We should accept nothing less than a strong and confident and growing middle class. In fact, we can't accept anything less, because we can only invest in core public services with a healthy, thriving private sector economy.

These two aspirations—to be the engine of Canadian job growth again and to have top-quality public services—are interdependent, not separate, goals. You can't have one without the other, and Ontarians deserve both. These are the goals of the Ontario PC Party, and they provide a clear choice for the people of Ontario when compared to the tired approach of this government.

Outlined in a spring budget passed in conjunction with support from the third party, this approach of continuous borrowing, spending and debt has led to neither private sector job creation nor sustainable public services. Instead of a change in course, today's economic statement simply doubles down on the failed jobs plan and the growing debt of the McGuinty government.

This is how we differ: We do not believe that the sun is setting on this great province of Ontario, and that government's role is to gently manage the decline. We reject that notion. We believe Ontario's best days are still ahead of us. We've always been the leader in job creation, a beacon from around the world for people to come to find a good job, to set up shop. That's the kind of Ontario we want to see, and the kind of Ontario we will have again.

This kind of prosperity was not simply handed to us. We earned it: driven entrepreneurs; hard-working, dedicated workers; vast and valuable resources. That can be ours again, but we need to take a different path than the one we're on here today. We're laying that out: a bold, optimistic, conservative vision to make Ontario lead again, to put Ontario back to work and to say to those unemployed in our province, "Help is on the way. Change is on the way. We will see an Ontario that leads this great country again in opportunity, in jobs."

How do we do that?

(1) You balance the books before 2017. The government does not need to grow each and every year, inexorably, deeper in debt. A PC government will balance before 2017 because you can't run the government on the credit card.

(2) We believe fundamentally that tax cuts create jobs to put money back into people's pockets, to say to businesses and entrepreneurs to invest here. If we want to get

out of this hole, we need the private sector to grow, and tax credits create jobs.

(3) We believe that the role of government is to provide the environment for success. No more red tape. End the runaround. Get behind businesses to help them create jobs and invest again in our great province.

(4) We cannot forget that the greater Toronto and Hamilton area is the heart of our economy, with badly clogged arteries. That's why we brought forward a bold plan to break gridlock and help people spend time with their families, to integrate the TTC rail with GO Transit under a powerful Metrolinx, and to say as a principle that, where money is available, a PC government will invest in subways, will build underground. That's what world-class cities do. That's a world-class approach to growing our economy in Ontario that will lead this great country again.

Mr. Michael Prue: Indeed, it is always a pleasure, I think, to listen to the Minister of Finance as he speaks about the wondrous face of the economy in this province, which absolutely is not correct. All one has to do, instead of listening to his thunderous speeches, is turn to pages 84 and 85 in the little book that he handed to us. Pages 84 and 85 talk about the summary of medium-term revenue changes since the budget and the medium-term fiscal plan and outlook. And you will see, if you open up the book instead of listening to his speech, that revenues are pretty static, that expenses are continuing to go up. The interest on the debt is going up. The total expense is going up. And, most importantly, this year there's a \$13-billion deficit, next year there will be a \$14.4-billion deficit, and the year after that, he's still mired, at \$12.8 billion, in deficit. Never has a government in the history of this province run so many deficits for so many years and stood here with such pride telling us how good things are.

I listened to these bromides and I listened to his solutions. He has no solutions. His only solution is to stick it to hard-working people, whether those people work for the government of Ontario or all the agencies in the municipalities, universities, social services and the hospital sector.

And he puts out a government report, a white paper, a kind of bill that he hasn't even got the courage to introduce in this House. It hasn't even been introduced for first reading, and already he's out there around the province talking to people, telling them how hard things are going to be.

He has said that he cannot negotiate with New Democrats. Well, I'm proud that we're not negotiating on a budget and a formula that he's putting forward. His formula is a formula of disaster. His formula is a formula that is going to put Ontario even further behind. He will make it even more difficult for ordinary people to make ends meet, and I will tell you, people, ordinary people in this province, will not be stuck this way. They will not be stuck this way because they have already done what they have to do. The unions and ordinary people have gone off to the courts. They are going to get redress where they have to get the redress.

This government knows that their plan will not work. This government knows that their plan is hopelessly doomed to failure. This is the largest deficit, as I said, in the history of Ontario, and it's ongoing and it will not be resolved in the course of this government or even the next one. There are entire sectors of this economy that are being sacrificed.

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One only has to look to northern Ontario to see the sacrifices that they are being told they have to make in terms of the railroad and in terms of the forestry industry. You only have to look in southern Ontario in the agricultural sector to see the people in the horse racing industry and how they are being told they have to suffer. You only have to look into all of our towns and cities to see the highest unemployment rate in the entire country and to see unemployment above the national average now for five years in a row. You only have to look around Ontario and see 600,000 people unemployed. You only have to look into a city like Toronto and see 85,000 families on the waiting list for public housing and no hope of getting that housing. You only have to look to Ontario to see the highest electricity rates in the entire country.

And what does this government say? That everything is rosy and we're on track and everything is going to be nice. It is simply not correct. New Democrats believe other things have to be done. We have to start looking for tax fairness. We have to start looking to tax fairness so that those people who can afford to pay do. Those corporations that gain so much in this province need to be able to pay at least the same rates that they pay in other provinces. You know, we need to see that the real GDP in decline, as documented by the finance minister's book itself, is turned around. That's the kind of thing that has to happen, not negotiating in the backroom with the Conservative Party how to make it even worse for ordinary people in the middle class. We demand that this government do a whole lot more than stand up and tell us how good things are going.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars...."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas servers and bartenders in Ontario earn \$8.90 an hour, far less than the minimum wage; and

"Whereas tips are given to servers and bartenders for good service and to supplement the lower wages they receive; and

"Whereas Ontario law allows for owners and managers to pocket a portion of servers' and bartenders' earned tips or total sales; and

"Whereas thousands of servers across the province have asked for this practice to stop;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the swift passage of Bill 107, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act with respect to tips and other gratuities and thereby end the practice of 'tip-outs' to management and owners."

It is signed by a great many people from the Ottawa area. I'm in agreement, will affix my signature thereto and send it with page Danielle.

WIRELESS SERVICE AGREEMENTS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas more than two thirds of Ontarians have a wireless service agreement;

"Whereas the majority of cellphone contracts are postpaid, often causing consumers surprise when they are charged for services they did not agree to or they did not know would result in added costs;

"Whereas consumers would benefit from clear and easy-to-understand language that describes the real costs and terms of wireless service agreements for cellphones, smart phones and other mobile devices;

"Whereas it is the responsibility of businesses to make sure their customers know what services they are paying for;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 82, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012 be adopted to make it easier for consumers to

understand the costs and terms of wireless services agreements while ensuring service providers are upfront with information before contracts are signed."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Matthew.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll probably need three pages, if you don't mind, Speaker. I have 3,000 petitions here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario Northland is not just about subsidies or jobs, it's about a way of life; and

"Whereas Ontario Northland is about controlling our destiny; and

"Whereas Ontario Northland is about ensuring future developments have a chance; and

"Whereas Ontario Northland is about building stronger communities; and

"Whereas Ontario Northland is about involvement in decisions that directly affect us as northerners; and

"Whereas Ontario Northland is about the north being equal in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to support the Northern Communities Working Group and support a new deal for Ontario Northland."

I have signed the petition. I'll sign my name to this and give it to pages Andrea, Larissa and Nancy.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinais: I have this petition from the people of the northeast, mainly Nickel Belt and Sudbury, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system..."

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page William to bring it to the Clerk.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are risks inherent in the use of ionizing, magnetic and other radiations in medical diagnostic and radiation therapy procedures; and

"Whereas the main piece of legislation governing these activities, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (HARPA), dates from the 1980s; and

"Whereas neither the legislation nor the regulations established under the act have kept pace with the explosion in imaging examinations, including image-guided procedures used in cardiology, radiation therapy, ultrasound, orthopaedics etc.;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish, as soon as possible, a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act to bring it up to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and covers all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I fully agree with this petition. I sign it and pass it on to page Natalie.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I support this, will affix my name and give it to page Anjali to take to the Clerk's desk.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my name to it and give it to page Olivia.

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COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from the residents of York South-Weston.

"Whereas there have been several incidents of violence and crime related to the illegal sale and service of alcohol in our community; and

"Whereas we, as a community, want safety and peace of mind and know that giving law enforcement better tools to combat criminal actions will help meet this goal;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 93, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act (Serving Liquor in Certain Places), 2012 into law."

I agree with this petition, I will affix my signature, and hand it over to page Larissa.

AIR QUALITY

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from one of my constituents, Eerwin Nulle.

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

I sign my name and give it to Uday.

TAXATION

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty take the unfair HST off of hydro and home heating bills."

I agree with this petition, I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Larissa to take to the Clerk.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Rouge Valley, Ajax and Pickering hospital campus was expanded and opened one and a half years ago, with the largest expansion in our community's history; and

"Whereas the new growth in this area creates added pressures to the system; and

"Whereas the rapid changes in modern technology create the need for infrastructure upgrades;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, sign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario continue to invest in our Ajax-Pickering community hospital by adding additional services on an ongoing basis so our residents can continue to receive the best care in this province."

I'll attach my signature and pass it on to page Justin.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the McGuinty government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I agree with this and I will be signing it.

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are risks inherent in the use of ionizing, magnetic and other radiations in medical diagnostic and radiation therapy procedures; and

"Whereas the main piece of legislation governing these activities, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act ... dates from the 1980s; and

"Whereas neither the legislation nor the regulations established under the act have kept pace with the explosion in imaging examinations, including image-guided procedures used in cardiology, radiation therapy, ultrasound, orthopaedics etc.;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish, as soon as possible, a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations and make recommendations on how to modernize this act to bring it up to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and covers all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and give it to page James.

ROAD SAFETY

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Highway Traffic Act requires drivers of a motor vehicle to slow down upon approaching an emergency vehicle that is stopped on the same side of a highway as that on which the driver is travelling; and

"Whereas 40 states in the United States and five provinces in Canada have included roadside assistance workers in 'Slow Down, Move Over' legislation, providing protection for tow trucks assisting motorists; and

"Whereas everyone deserves a safe place to work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario passes Bill 38, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to safety precautions to take when approaching roadside assistance vehicles into law."

As I'm in agreement, I've affixed my signature and given it to page Natalie.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the price of gas is reaching historic price levels and is expected to increase another 15% in the near future, yet oil prices are dropping; and

"Whereas the real reason for the high price of gas is gas companies are putting pressure to allow for the pipeline from Alberta to Texas; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has done nothing to protect consumers from high gas prices; and

"Whereas the high and unstable gas prices across Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship to Ontario's drivers while also impacting the Ontario economy in key sectors such as tourism and transportation; and

"Whereas the high price of gas has a detrimental impact on all aspects of our already troubled economy and substantially increases the price of delivered commodities, adding further burden to Ontario consumers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and urge the Premier to take action to protect consumers from the burden of high gas prices in Ontario."

I affix my name in full support.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WIRELESS SERVICES AGREEMENTS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LES CONVENTIONS DE SERVICES SANS FIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 20, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / Projet de loi 82, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to stand this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 82. The Ministry of Consumer Services' proposed bill, Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device, is a good thing.

In my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, I have received many calls from young people about their concerns, as consumers—their voice—on this particular piece of mobile devices. In recent years, there has been an explosion in the use of wireless communication devices, where more than 70% of Ontarians have some form of mobile device on hand, at home or at work as well.

Many in Ontario are experiencing cell shock every time they open their wireless bills, as they don't understand what their services are and what plan they've signed up for, especially when we are dealing with a very diverse community like in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt. This has been a major concern in my riding.

The other thing about this piece of legislation is that we, as a government, have a responsibility to ensure every Ontarian, as a consumer—the agreement that they are signing, that they understand it, and more importantly that it's in clear and comprehensive language so that they know what they are signing.

The other piece about the legislation is that our government has taken strong action to eliminate the shock that many consumers are getting when they receive their service bill. For example, the proposed legislation would have stronger protections for Ontario families when they sign a cellphone contract. They now know in clear, simple language what they are signing for. It's language they can understand, and they can also follow up.

The proposed legislation would put onuses on the business, not the consumers, to make sure the customers know what they're signing. This is no different from when we are dealing with health care. As many people in the House know, where I come from, in the health sector, no patient should be signing a health consent when they don't know what they're signing for. So this is the right thing to do.

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Furthermore, this legislation is to help families and individuals so that they now have choices. This is the right thing to do so that they know, when they're buying something, that they are being protected, that their hard-earned dollar—that they know what they're signing and that that money is going to a good place.

Helping consumers is also a piece of this legislation, Mr. Speaker. If you look through the bill, it clearly talks about consumers' rights and their choices. This is the thing that we are concerned about: that the proposed legislation is committed to educating, not just protecting the consumer, and also making sure it's a fair and informed marketplace.

The other piece about the legislation, if passed, is that besides being in plain, simple language, to spell out what the contracts say, it also talks about express consent: Before you renew your contract or extend a contract or amend a contract, the consumer needs to know what they're signing, and that there is a cap on any kind of cancellation.

I remember a young person coming to my constituency office, Mr. Speaker. Because English is his second language, he was asking me to translate what he had just signed. That is not the responsibility of me as a member of this House. More importantly, the responsibility is to that particular business person who asked the young person to sign. The onus is on the business to make sure that every customer, every consumer, who is asked to sign a contract knows what they're signing before they leave the door.

The other piece about this legislation is regarding the whole issue of advertisements. The concern here is that there are so many advertisements of different kinds of mobility services out there, and many of these advertisements are not accurate information. When you're attracting young people to buying these mobile devices, they

don't know what they're signing, first of all. But second of all, the ad looks really good, and then they go in there and they don't know what they're getting into.

The other piece of the legislation is the fact that we as a government have consulted the industry, the consumers' groups, and they have told us very clearly that they support this proposed legislation.

I'm quoting one of the mobility service providers: "We are grateful that Ontario is taking further steps to ensure its citizens are not impacted by restrictive, oppressive wireless practices, like excessive early contract termination fees. Ontario is definitely on the right track, and we hope other provinces will keep the train going until all consumers from coast to coast get the protection they deserve." This is a quote from Stewart Lyons, president and COO of Mobility.

The other concern about this particular bill is that this proposed legislation is similar to other provinces', which have acted similarly in terms of this wireless service sector. The key difference in Bill 82 is that Ontario proposes adding a duty to alert consumers. This is really important. We need to inform consumers who are receiving additional charges so that they don't get a surprise just before Christmas—"Oh, my God, you're going to have an increase in your service fee charge"—of this additional charge for exceeding base service in the agreement—and greater clarity on the role of consumer consent to all changes to the fixed-term agreements.

For example, each one of us probably carries one or two BlackBerrys/cellphones, and each one of us will have advance notices; if there is an exceeding cost to your agreement, you will be informed in advance. You will not be shocked, receiving something the day that the bill is due. This is a very important feature about this particular bill.

The other piece about the legislation is the fact that we cannot wait for the federal government. There has been some concern expressed from the opposition party, saying that the federal government is looking into it. Well, you know what? Leadership means we stand for our consumers now. Very shortly, young people will be attracted to the Christmas sale of cellphones. There will be a new gadget being promoted in the industry. We need to support our consumers, especially young people, and their families. I don't know how many people in this House, 107 of us, have not received a call or complaint about cellphones—from the salesperson trying to attract the consumers into the office and trying to sell another electrical device for home.

The other piece about this legislation, Mr. Speaker, instead of waiting for the federal government to come with their legislation, we have a duty, we have a responsibility to make sure that we stand together collectively as a House to support consumers' rights and protect their rights, because if the federal government is keen on passing legislation, they would have done so. The CRTC has the mandate in their regulation to do such a thing. Instead of waiting, it's our responsibility in this House to

speak in support of consumers, especially the young people across Ontario.

My colleagues probably have already spoken about this piece: Manitoba and Quebec already engage in public consultation on wireless consumer legislation. Other provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador introduced similar legislation in March of this year, reaching third reading consent in April of this year about this issue. They now have royal assent with regard to the legislation. In November this past year, Nova Scotia introduced similar legislation and received royal assent to their legislation.

We're not behind other provinces, Mr. Speaker. The key piece here is, are we going to let our young people, the consumers of this province, not be protected? We have a responsibility to make sure everyone in this province who has a cellphone, a BlackBerry or a mobile device is protected.

The other piece of the legislation—and I know the opposition parties don't want to address the fact—is that clearly, explicitly in the bill it talks about consumers' rights. I want to share with the members of this House section 7 of this bill, which talks about clear disclosure of the information. Let me take some time, Mr. Speaker, to share with the House what it says here in section 7 on consumer rights:

"If a supplier is required to disclose information to a consumer under this act or the regulations made under it, the supplier shall disclose the information in a manner that is clear, comprehensible and prominent and shall deliver the information in a form in which the consumer can retain it."

Mr. Speaker, it's very, very clear that the proposed Bill 82 requires the wireless service sector to be responsible to inform—the key piece is "inform." And the consumer has the right to ask for clarification because if the consumer does not know what he signed, he has the obligation to get clarification, most importantly in language that he can understand, especially in a community that is so diverse. We need to make sure every consumer who is signing their wireless contract understands what he is also signing.

The other piece about the legislation, about consumers' rights, is advertisement. In section 8 of the proposed bill—and I'm going to quote here: "If information on the cost to a consumer is included in any advertising with respect to a wireless agreement, the supplier shall ensure that the information includes an all-inclusive cost, other than the harmonized sales tax payable under part IX of the Excise Tax Act (Canada), that shows"—and it lists the various requirements.

Again, no consumers in Ontario should be shocked in their contract—that they don't know what they're paying for. In this legislation, the consumer now knows what is included in the bill, that they're not paying for something that's not clearly stated.

The other piece in the legislation, in section 10 of the proposed legislation, talks about disclosure in the agreement. Section 10 of the legislation says, "A supplier

under a wireless agreement shall ensure that the agreement is in writing and that it discloses the following information:

"1. The name of the consumer.

"2. The name of the supplier and, if different, the name under which the supplier carries on business."

This is really important. There are so many wireless service providers out there, and oftentimes the consumers do not know who are the providers and who are the sub-contractors there. This legislation requires the disclosure of the name of the supplier.

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"3. The telephone number of the supplier, the address of the premises from which the supplier conducts business and information respecting other ways, if any, in which the consumer can contact the supplier, such as by contacting a fax number or an electronic mail address."

Mr. Speaker, let me share with the House an experience I just had this past month. I recently bought a tablet to sync with my BlackBerry. Less than one month after purchasing this tablet, the device did not work. I had to find out who was the supplier, and then there was a merry-go-round of, "I don't own this. I don't own that. It's somebody else's." The supplier is in the United States. So that merry-go-round came around. I think if I had that in the legislation now, I would not be calling all over, as the staff in my office had to call all over. It is critically important that I have the ability—other people may not have the ability to navigate this piece, because it's so complex, the wireless service industry.

Number four of this disclosure information is the date on which the agreement is entered into.

"5. The term of the agreement.

"6. The expiry date," which is really important, "if any, of the agreement as agreed to by the parties to the agreement.

"7. A description that itemizes each of the services, including optional services, that the consumer can access under the agreement and the effect of each of the services on costs payable by the consumer, including..."

Again, the proposed legislation requires the wireless service industry to disclose everything they're asking the consumers to sign, and that is the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, we are here as members, parliamentarians in this House, to do what we can not just about the wireless industry; our government is committed to protecting consumers across the board.

This is proposed legislation to protect consumers, from young to old, and also workplaces. Many workplaces require their employees to carry their wireless devices all the time. It's an accessibility piece but also to ensure that their device is accessible. This particular legislation, if passed, would ensure that consumers, whether young persons or employees, and industry across Ontario—that their rights are being protected and everybody knows what they are signing.

The other piece of this is the fact that when we made this proposed legislation, the Minister of Consumer Services talked greatly about the fact that our proposed

legislation has already consulted the industry. The other provinces, when they brought in this legislation, did not consult the industry. We know that the different consumer advocacy groups have supported our proposed legislation. I'm going to share a quote with you from the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. Their executive director shared a quote with me: "Each and every day, consumers of wireless services complain about one-sided conditions and unfairness in the marketplace. This bill addresses those concerns. It will help provide a level playing field for Ontario customers of wireless services and open the door to real competition in this industry." That was stated by Michael Janigan, who is the executive director and general counsel of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre.

As we draft this proposed legislation, it is the right thing to do for the government to talk to the industry, to talk to other service providers, but most importantly to consult the industries, small and large, because we need to make sure that when we bring in legislation, on one hand it supports and protects consumers, but at the same time industry does not get compromised as we bring in the legislation.

The other piece about this legislation here is that, as any government, our duty as a government is to protect and empower consumers, to give them confidence that when you work in Ontario, when you do industry in Ontario, your rights are being protected, but at the same time your rights are not protected at the expense of another. At the end of the day, the proposed legislation is here to serve two fronts: one, to protect consumer's rights; and second, to ensure that every consumer and their families in Ontario, when they sign any kind of wireless agreement, they have greater transparency, they have the protection that they deserve and they know what they are signing.

The contract of any wireless device is not just for today. We also know that the proliferation of the wireless industry is for tomorrow. Ten years ago, we would not be carrying a BlackBerry cellphone or any kind of other iPhone or tablet. I would dare say that probably in another 10 years, there will be another generation of wireless devices that will probably hook up to our earpieces and in our car, in our daily lives. This proposed legislation is to ensure that consumers' protection is here to stay, but at the same time, to help the industry, because even the industry is advocating for some kind of transparency and protection of the consumers.

At the end of the day, most of the consumers are championing legislation like this, and they're asking our government—any government, for that matter—to do the right thing, to protect their rights, so when they sign the contracts they are in a clear language that everybody can understand.

My last couple of comments on this particular bill: We have legislation that is not just about protection. The other piece about this legislation is, it's consumer-friendly. The consumer is championing this. Sometimes government leads; in this case, the consumers are leading, asking us and advocating for us to move forward so

that we, as all three parties, can bring this to the committee, further vetting and strengthening this particular bill.

I would say that nobody in this House does not support consumers and Ontarians, because we are here to serve, but most importantly, we're here to protect everyone in Ontario, whether they're a young person or seniors who've been mishandled on this file. Everybody now has an opportunity to be protected in the same breath.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened very carefully to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt. This bill has been around since May and has been discussed a few times in September. I've spoken myself on this bill, and I really think you should be very careful and look under section 10—the disclosure agreement, I think, is important.

But really, this is a bill that's just sort of piling on. If you look at the bill itself, it was introduced eight days after the federal regulatory authority, the CRTC, announced that they would have consultations to discuss this very topic. I think it's important to recognize that it is federal. We'd like harmonization for all Canadian citizens, from coast to coast to coast, in the use and charges and how the various service providers bill and bill for what, and that the contract intents are clear.

I think Ontario should be a delegation, actually, to the CRTC. They should try to bring forward the idea that, first of all, we want continuity with the whole process on wireless communication, because that's the future. I understand that, and many of our speakers, I know, will be anxious to comment in the next few minutes and will also make the point very clearly that we'd be in support of anything that eliminates red tape and bureaucracy. That's sort of a byline from our leader, Tim Hudak. We've got to avoid, where possible, patchwork responses, which, I might say, Ontario has done a number of times, just being in disagreement with the federal government.

This is about customer service at the very highest. All of us have bills. Just last week, one of the devices I use was cut off. Why was it cut off? With no notice, I was unable to access the Internet, because my mobile stick was cancelled because the bill wasn't paid. I don't even pay the bill; it's paid by the Ontario Legislative Assembly, so McGuinty has run out of money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm also happy to stand and lend my voice to this debate. I listened to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt and, like I said, I'm pleased to see this bill coming forward to make sure we're protecting consumers.

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I know that I and I'm sure many of us across this House have personal stories where our phone bills have been a lot more than we expected. Now we have our

children with cellphones also, and we see parents who are coming to us with \$500, \$600, \$700 phone bills, saying, "How is this happening? I was promised a price, and now this is what it has led us to." So it's quite important.

I would just like to mention some numbers I see here. In 2007 and 2008, 31% of complaints about telecommunications services were about wireless services. In 2010 and 2011, those numbers increased by over 114%. They're pretty scary numbers. We definitely need to make sure we're moving forward with this, whether it be with our federal partners or whether we're doing it on our own; it's an important cause. We all need to make sure we're in support of this, making sure we're protecting the consumers of this province and making sure that contracts can't be written with underlying issues to them that consumers have no idea what the actual cost is going to be at the end of the day.

So I congratulate the member for bringing this forward. I hope that we will be able to get this moved through soon, because I do believe we have been doing it since May and that's long enough. Let's just get it going. Hopefully we'll have committees struck soon, and we can take it to committee and get down to the real work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to speak today in support of the Wireless Services Agreements Act. It's always so great when we hear all parties speaking in support of consumer protection in Ontario. That's great to hear.

The other thing that I think is important is when we get those outside, third-party endorsements. The member from Scarborough—Agincourt spoke to one of those very strong endorsements, and I'd like to speak to one or two others, if I may. At the end of the day, we in the House are all somewhat knowledgeable about a lot of things, but it's very important to validate and hear from other people in the sector or business where we're talking about legislative change.

Don Mercer from the Consumers Council of Canada said, "Contracts for cellular voice and data services and equipment rate as top-10 sources of consumer complaints in Ontario.... Many consumers feel their rights are unfairly limited and find it hard to understand their responsibilities under these agreements. Quebec has already exercised its authority for contracts in this area. Other provinces across Canada should take responsibility and prompt action, as well."

Also, from Stewart Lyons, president and chief operating officer of mobile-city—I think that's how you say it.

Mr. Michael Harris: Mobility.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Mobility? Thank you.

"We are grateful that Ontario is taking further steps to ensure its citizens are not impacted by restrictive, oppressive wireless practices, like excessive early contract termination fees.... Ontario is definitely on the right track and we hope other provinces will keep the trend going until all consumers from coast to coast get the protection they deserve."

There you have it, Speaker. I think that outside endorsements are critical when we bring in legislation like this, and again, I just want to congratulate all the parties for supporting consumer protection in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I rise to speak on this bill. I'm somewhat wondering why it's coming forth, because we already had a bill, Bill 5, in committee, which looked after most of the issues this bill discusses. It was in committee, so there was a chance, if there was a hurry, to get through this. I say that because there has to be some caution. It is a federal jurisdiction. They are looking into this, and I think it would serve the country much better to have laws that really overlook the whole country. It's the best way to keep costs down. In saying that, we are looking for this bill to go to committee, because there need to be some changes; for instance, the automatic lapse of service when your contract comes due. People I know, especially seniors, tend to keep their cell service. They don't rush out to replace the phone when it's done. I think it would be a little disheartening to find out that the service is now dead just because they haven't gone out to renew and sign a new contract.

We do have some other provinces like Quebec and Manitoba that have a contract out there, and in our discussions with cell companies we want to make sure they're not reinventing things, especially if it's done on the short term, because consumers will only be forced to pay more to pay for these changes. I think we want to look around at some of the other legislation around the province and around the country, and, I think as our member from Durham had said, work with the federal government as they go through and they put through some needed amendments. We do have a very large country with a relatively small number of users, so we want to make sure, especially in rural areas, that we actually get the service that we find very common in downtown Toronto, but once you leave the 401 corridor, really, the cell service becomes a service that many areas don't have. We want to make sure we look after all our areas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt for her reply.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the members from Durham, Hamilton Mountain, Pickering–Scarborough East and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

This proposed legislation, Bill 82: I heard the comments from my colleague from Durham and the last speaker. If we wait until the federal government—whereas, when we look at other provinces like Quebec, Manitoba and Nova Scotia, they already have legislation. So if we are sincere and keen to support and protect our consumers, everybody in this House knows that in less than two months it's Christmas. And you know, around

that time of the year, there will be lots of new toys coming out—asking parents to buy another toy or electrical device to go for Christmas and the New Year's celebration. If we are intent, as this bill is intent to do, to support and protect the consumers and empower them, we need to make sure we move this proposed legislation to committee so that it will be debated and that we can do clause-by-clause.

I also want to acknowledge my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for your comments about the fact that there is cell shock, about the parents and the families, because it is disheartening, especially when there are hard-working families who are being surprised—they get a \$700 or \$800 phone bill when the contract states very clearly there's a fixed-term agreement. So how does that work? It is the right thing to do to move this proposed legislation to committee so that we can have a healthy continued discussion and strengthen the proposed legislation.

In the last piece, to my colleague opposite from the PC Party, if we wait for the federal government for everything, we may not get anything done, okay? The fact is that if they were really sincere about protecting the consumers, they would have proposed legislation in the House sooner than wait for the CRTC. So thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I rise today to also make remarks to Bill 82, Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2012. I guess, listening to the last speaker, I'm really still not aware why in fact this bill is being debated again today when we have in fact already passed Bill 5, MPP David Orazietti's bill, the Wireless Phone, Smart Phone and Data Service Transparency Act, 2011, which was supported in second reading with support from all political parties, I'll remind folks.

Bill 82 goes in depth on the formulas that consumers should be charged if they cancel their phone contract.

Bill 5, however, clearly states that companies should “reduce the cancellation fee charged to consumers through a prescribed formula.” So, really, Bill 82 simply expands that formula. There are many, many more examples of the overlap, which I would like to draw your attention to with my remarks.

First, in essence of actually implementing legislation to help Ontarians with their minority cellphone charges, Bill 82 actually slows the process down when the bill itself could be implemented as amendments to Bill 5.

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I would like to draw the effect, though, that it's possibly because the government won't re-strike committees, which would move business forward in this Legislature. The member previous spoke about the fact that they wouldn't want to wait for the federal government. However, their own government is in fact stalling this very legislation through their own inaction on striking committees, so I would encourage those members—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm not sure what the member from Guelph is referring to, because clearly, we've asked for unanimous consent several times in this House since it has resumed for the striking of committees, to get back to the business of the committees, such as estimates, where we are currently waiting for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to come back so we can review those estimates; of course, public accounts—which that member from Guelph is a member of—and review the good business workings of that committee in looking at the ongoing at Ornge.

There's also the finance committee that we've actually called for to deal with the most recent issue of the Legislature, and that's the breach of privilege from my colleague from Cambridge and the fact that the minister refused to table the documents as we had asked in estimates.

Then there's the general government committee; a lot of my constituents are in fact asking me: "What's happening with the government's call for the Aggregate Resources Act review?"

I would encourage those members and the member who just spoke recently, instead of calling on the federal government and waiting for them to do something, to have their own members speak to their government House leader and their Premier to get committees re-struck. I would also encourage those colleagues to speak to Ms. Best and Mr. Oraziotti to encourage them as well to strike those committees.

I would like to speak about the differences, or the similarities, of Bill 5 and Bill 82 and express the overlap of these bills. I'll just briefly talk about Bill 82. For example, providers will need to clearly explain which services are provided and which would result in added costs, how services can be accessed and what rates and restrictions apply, for example, if a long distance plan is within Ontario only.

Bill 5 says: Clearly disclose the cost of all mandatory and optional services included in the agreement and provide service agreements in plain language, making them more understandable to consumers. My analysis on this is that this can clearly be specified in an amendment in committee, which we don't have right now because of the government's refusal to get the business of the committees back in order. Again, I would encourage them to do so.

Bill 82: Information will be included in the agreement on how cancellation fees are calculated; cancel agreements at any time with caps on cancellation fees or no fee at all. The proposed legislation will give consumers the right to cancel a wireless services agreement at any time by giving notice to their wireless service provider. The cost to cancel would depend on the type of agreement. Bill 5 calls for it to reduce the cancellation fee charged to consumers through a prescribed formula. The formula is given in Bill 82, which Bill 5 also asks for. Again, there's substantial overlap between the two.

Bill 82: Companies will have to provide clear information on how roaming costs are calculated and when they

will be incurred. I can tell you, speaking to constituents both young and old, this is a major holdup for them in terms of the roaming costs when they travel outside of Ontario. I can even tell you, for example, when you go to Ottawa, it says that you've now crossed the border into Quebec, or when you're in Windsor they may have identified you as being over in Detroit. The same goes for Niagara. When you're down in Niagara Falls, it says you're in Buffalo, New York. So this presents a lot of concern for constituents and consumers on the whole roaming aspect of it.

Bill 5 says it would notify the customer or consumer when they may incur additional charges as a result of exceeding usage limits, or for attempting to use a service outside geographical limits set out in the agreement. Again, the analysis would be here that Bill 82 and Bill 5 are very similar, if not the same.

Back to Bill 82, an example: Contracts will need to include the retail value and the actual cost to the consumer of phones provided free or at a discount. Bill 5 would make costs more transparent when advertising the price of wireless services and provide billing statements in paper form at no extra cost at the request of the consumer—again, very similar to this.

I can assure you, as the member previously stated, that coming up to the Christmas season, a lot of folks will be eyeing new purchases. We hope that some of those consumers will hold off until the spring of next year, when Research In Motion's new BlackBerry comes out in mid-spring, mid-March. I had an opportunity to see both devices and I can tell you that consumers will be rushing to their local Rogers or Bell to pick up their BlackBerry.

I know the member previously also talked about some of the problems she has had recently with a purchase of a PDA. I would have hoped that that member would have purchased a made-in-Ontario or made-in-Canada product through Research In Motion, the BlackBerry PlayBook. I can assure you that she would have loved that product and wouldn't have had the problems that she's having now. As many of the members in fact have, I have mine in here somewhere, too. I'm a proud user of the BlackBerry PlayBook, as I know are many of the members, such as the member from Oakville. I would encourage him to speak to the member from Mississauga in perhaps sending that one back and picking up a Research In Motion BlackBerry PlayBook. I can assure you that she will not have those problems should she go out and purchase that.

So just getting back again to the overlap of the two bills here: In Bill 82, companies will have to provide whether a cellphone is locked, for how long, and the cost to unlock it. Bill 5 calls for unlocking, at no additional cost, any device that has been paid for in full or is no longer bound by a service agreement; again, very similar in that respect.

All in all, the bill really, in hindsight, is jumping the gun on what can already be debated in committee. Again, if we'd had those committees, we could have taken the

member's bill, Bill 5, proposed some amendments to it that the government has so-called included in their Bill 82, and got this passed a long time ago.

If the bill actually wanted to tackle the highest-ranked problem with cellphone providers, it's high prices and poor customer service, which I think a lot of consumers, when they call to complain, are complaining about: the customer service aspect of it. In fact, a 2010 report by the New America Foundation comparing wireless plans from around the world found Canadian consumers pay the highest minimum monthly charge for cellphone services out of 11 countries, which is substantial.

There's a point here to make, that the cost to Ontarians is becoming unbearable when it is a service that 88% of residents rely on on a daily basis. I know they're bringing out a tablet for toddlers that's extremely popular, come Christmastime. But kids as young as the ones who are here in the galleries visiting Queen's Park have cellphones at such a young age. In fact, I'm sure a lot of these young pages here are eagerly waiting to get into the back and check their messages on their own phones at such a young age. And seniors are now becoming the biggest users of PDAs because they just love Facebook and everything else to keep connected to their grandchildren and children from all across the province and in fact the country, and even the world.

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Interjection: Skype.

Mr. Michael Harris: There's this Skype feature. I know on my BlackBerry PlayBook we've got the ability to have video chat. At home, I can have a chat with Murphy at night, when I'm here in Toronto. So I can assure you, folks are out buying more and more of these PDAs and electronic devices to be able to communicate as they are far apart.

I want to get back again to the situation at hand, which I feel is important, and that's to note the overlap. We are in fact standing here debating a bill today, when the CRTC, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, is in fact preparing to create a nationwide regulation. I think that's important to note. This creates, obviously, great inconsistency for Ontario and Canada's major service providers. The logic is skewed here. In fact, the Liberal government insists on creating more agencies, boards and commissions but then won't respect the work that they are set out to do.

Instead of debating this overlapping bill here today, as I'd mentioned, the government should be on the CRTC consultation board and work with them to respond to the concerns of Ontarians, Ontario consumers, especially when the CRTC overrules any telecommunication bill that could be passed in this House. I think that probably one of the biggest take-aways of my remarks today is the fact that the federal government, through the CRTC, is in fact looking at this.

That's why I would also like to highlight another piece of legislation: my private member's bill, Bill 109, the act respecting government bills. I'd like to draw two key points on that. This would require the government to do a

cost-benefit assessment but also two critical points: an assessment of the relationship between the bill and other Ontario legislation and federal legislation. They would have to provide a detailed description of any potential overlap between the bill and existing municipal bylaws or federal legislation. Fortunately, this passed second reading but is now stuck in thin air, as again, we do not have committees to debate this important legislation. Had this bill passed third and final reading, the government would have had to take into account that federal overlap that, again, wouldn't require us to be sitting here and debating Bill 82, because we would have already likely passed Bill 5.

Again, the bill, we believe, is simply jumping the gun. As I'd mentioned, the CRTC is in fact preparing to create a national regulation. I think it's important to note, in fact, that the major providers are on board with this and the CRTC.

It's kind of interesting as well, though, that the bill was announced eight days after the CRTC announced consultations, and was tabled the same day the CRTC consultations closed. Again, I would have encouraged the government to actively participate in this consultation. As I had mentioned before, the CRTC in fact can overrule any telecommunication bill that is passed in this House.

Unfortunately, too, this bill kills Bill 5, which was already in committee. We believe, in fact, that Bill 5 was a more comprehensive approach to protecting consumers, such as mandating unlocking the phones.

I often see folks who go out and buy cellphones at silent auctions or what have you and are forced to actually have to go with the service provider that they may or may not want to use. They may buy a Rogers phone and want to use the Bell service etc. I think that's also an important aspect of it.

I also think it's important to share that the government doesn't share the whole truth regarding the complaints. They cite the telecoms complaints commissioner, who logged, in fact, 8,000 complaints against cellphone providers. MCS itself received some complaints about cellphone providers, but gyms get a lot more, and we don't see MCS regulating gyms with the same zeal, which I think is some—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Don't give them any ideas.

Mr. Michael Harris: Yes, good point. We don't want to give them any more ideas on that one.

There's also no catastrophic market failure. Canada-wide calling is being taken up by more operators; more are offering tabs rather than term contracts so you can only defer payment for your mobile device.

You know what? We should actually not compare the whole of Canada to Europe because, obviously, it's a different geography, different regulations, and when we do compare, we could actually fare better.

There's also major frustration, again, in the customer service aspect of it. The bill can't do anything to really address the customer service aspect of it. Again, I think it's something that they should be looking at.

All-in pricing in advertising should apply to everyone, simply without exception.

The government needs to ensure good consultation on this bill at committee. Again, I'll go back to highlighting the fact that the committees are in limbo. We don't have the ability to meet and debate and propose amendments to important pieces of legislation or have hearings on important aspects, like the public accounts committee to hear the important goings-on of Ornge; or the finance committee to hear folks coming in on the issue that the member from Cambridge raised on the contempt motion for the Minister of Energy and the government trying to hide the true costs of the Oakville and Mississauga power plants.

That's just back again to the important necessity of the government getting back to the work of this Legislature and striking committees. I encourage the members on that side of the House, when they see their member from Kitchener Centre, the House leader, to encourage them to get back to the table, strike committees and let the work of those committees carry forward.

Again, I think it's important to just highlight the fact that this overlap is in existence. We're standing here talking today, debating a bill, Bill 82, that we already in fact have sitting, waiting at committee to be debated. They simply could have proposed some of the amendments at committee that would have further enhanced Bill 5. As the member previously had stated, we are not going to wait for the federal government, but in essence, we're going to wait a heck of a lot longer here in Ontario for those committees to be struck so we can get to the real business of this Legislature and address the important consumer protection items like the content of Bill 5 does.

I'll wrap it up at that and I'll await comments from my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener—Conestoga. He hit on some good points there. Nothing is perfect, especially when you can't take it to committee to work it out; that really makes it difficult. Certainly, I hope the committees get set up very shortly—and I mean very shortly—so we can get some work done in this House.

The people of this province don't realize that nothing's being accomplished here. All these bills that are coming forward and all the things we're doing here and all the discussions and debate we're having—nothing's getting done because the government hasn't struck any committees and until they do, this is practically a waste of time, and the people of Ontario should know that.

The main messages of this bill: There needs to be greater protection for consumers of wireless phone, smart phone and mobile data services. New Democrats support this legislation. It's a good thing to protect the consumer.

The legislation would put an end to unfair practices by wireless service providers by requiring clear disclosure of

all optional and mandatory services, including the disclosure of hidden fees and contract cancellation penalties. A lot of times consumers go and sign contracts for various things. If you don't read the fine print, you find out four or five months later, if you want to cancel, "Oh, I'm sorry, there's a cancellation charge." It ends up being more than your bill cost for the five months.

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There's all these other little hidden things people face that they don't realize, because a lot of times in your busy life, you're in a hurry and you're thinking this company you're dealing with is going to be credible because they want to have a good name in the public and they don't want to have people saying bad things about their company. So you trust them, and a lot of times they really don't spell it out, and they'll just say, "Well, you should have read it." I really think that's unfair. I think it should be spelled out in layman's terms. Sometimes there's a language barrier and people get ripped off, and it's not right.

I think this is a start. There could be more added to this, but this legislation is a good start to protect people out there who really have problems with these companies. I think it will put companies on notice that the people of Ontario are going to be treated fairly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to rise in the debate on Bill 82. I appreciate the perspectives of the members from Kitchener—Conestoga and Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Speaker, as the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek said, this bill is all about protecting consumers. This is a step in the right direction. This bill will benefit Ontario families through clear, plain and easy-to-understand language when they sign their service contracts. This bill will also provide greater transparency, and if and when consumers want to cancel their contract, they can cancel it at a modest fee. This proposed bill, if passed, will also put the onus on businesses to make sure that customers are clearly informed of what services they are paying for.

The member from Kitchener—Conestoga spoke about the CRTC regulation. I also read in the *Globe and Mail* on Friday that the CRTC will start holding consultations. But they will only start in the month of January, whereas we introduced this bill in May 2012. They're not creating any regulations; they will just be holding consultations. And I have not seen anything from the feds to come forward and say they are supporting CRTC rules or anything.

This is all about protecting consumers, so that they are able to make informed decisions and smart choices.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I did listen very carefully to the comments made by my colleague the member from Kitchener—Conestoga with respect to Bill 82, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, and he made eminent

good sense to me. On one hand, he's certainly acknowledging that there is a need for greater consumer protection. I don't think anybody would deny that. In fact, the Consumers Council of Canada indicated, and I'll just quote here, "Contracts for cellular voice and data services and equipment rate as top-10 sources of consumer complaints in Ontario," said Consumers Council of Canada President Don Mercer. 'Many consumers feel their rights are unfairly limited and find it hard to understand their responsibilities under these agreements.'"

Certainly, that's fair to say, but there are arguments on the other side that we need to take into consideration. One is the fact that the CRTC is already preparing to create a national regulation, and I think it's really important in our deliberations that we make sure we understand there isn't an overlap, that we don't have a patchwork of different agreements across the country and don't have repetition.

The other thing that I think we need to keep in mind is that we don't want to go too far. There is a balance that has to be maintained here. Maybe it's the lawyer in me. I certainly do recognize the concept of the sanctity of contracts; that after all, people are presumed to understand what they sign. But I certainly do acknowledge the fact that there are situations where it's very buried in the fine print and maybe people find it hard to understand and there are different nuances in each contract.

The other thing, as the member mentioned, is that the problem isn't as bad as has been made out. There are complaints about a number of agencies that require some assistance, including complaints about gyms, but we haven't pursued those with the same zeal. I'm just saying that we need to maintain a balance, which is really the reason we need to get it into committees as soon as possible.

I would certainly urge the government to constitute those committees so that we can get on with the work of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise to speak to G82. I think the main thrust of the bill is—it states here that the legislation "would put an end to unfair practices by wireless service providers by requiring clear disclosure of all optional and mandatory services, including the disclosure of 'hidden fees' and contract cancellation penalties."

I find it quite ironic—here we are dealing with a scenario where we're attempting, as an opposition party, to learn about all of the cancellation costs through a contract that was brokered with gas plants in the municipalities of Oakville and Mississauga—that the governing party is willing to offer some consumer protection for those who have cellphone bills, and I think that's a commendable initiative, however, when we're talking about the billions in the public purse, an order of magnitude that pales in comparison, you wonder where their real intent is.

As a member of our side here, I can tell you that we are all for consumer protection, whether it's for cell-

phones, hydro prices, electricity rates, gas prices—especially at the pump; we introduced a wonderful initiative that would've capped the price of gasoline at the pump on Monday mornings, but that initiative was voted down in this House. It may be, at some point, that we return to that, to offer more consumer protection.

But all told, I think that the intent of this bill is straightforward. It looks to add some clarity to cellphone bills. I frequently go into the Windsor area, where we're just across the river from Detroit, and we see roaming charges suddenly appear on our cellphone bills. It would be nice to see that go away, but I would love to see the thrust of this bill applied more generally to the government's principles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments.

I return to the member for Kitchener—Conestoga for his reply.

Mr. Michael Harris: I would like to thank those members who made comments on my initial remarks on Bill 82: the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, the member for Mississauga—Brampton South, of course, my colleague, the member for Whitby—Oshawa and, most recently, the member for Essex.

Again, I think that what we've taken from this is that what we all need and want and ask for is greater consumer protection. I will build off the remarks, just recently, of the member for Essex. When he mentions the reason why we've been here as of late, speaking about greater transparency, accountability—we often refer to the Premier as the fine-print Premier, and I'd almost think that he has a hand in writing some of these contracts that Ontarians seem to be so confused about these days.

I know, too, credit needs to be given to some of the service providers. In their retail stores, some of their agents do a very good job of educating consumers when they come in to buy a new BlackBerry, for instance, in terms of what that contract will look like, but there are some instances where there are language barriers and just that sheer being overwhelmed, whether you're a young person, excited to get that new phone, to log on to Facebook, or you're a senior looking to get an iPad or a PlayBook to be able to communicate with friends and family abroad.

I can appreciate the fact that greater consumer protection is needed when it comes to cellphones and wireless carriers, but it is just so outrageous that the government of the day—the fine-print Premier—won't allow Ontarians to see the true costs of what a political decision that they made to save Liberal seats will actually cost, and hit consumers in their pockets.

I'll leave it at that, and go from there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), after six and a half hours of debate, I am required to adjourn the debate, unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Speaker, the government wishes to continue the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

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Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 82 this afternoon. Bill 82 is an act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device.

I guess I would pose a question to begin with: Why is Ontario getting involved in this, especially when you think of all the provincial concerns we have? When I do that, I think about my constituency office versus the federal constituency office, and it seems like every issue is provincial. I think you would likely agree that our provincial constituency offices are likely 10 times busier than the federal ones. This is an area that is primarily within federal jurisdiction, so I'm not quite sure, with all the problems out there that are provincial, why the province is deciding to jump into this one, especially in light of the fact that the CRTC, the national regulator, is looking into this very issue.

In fact, the bill was announced just eight days after the CRTC announced consultations, and was tabled the same day as the CRTC consultations closed. It seems to me that if the federal government does pass some new laws, the logical approach would have been for the province to play a role and certainly raise all the concerns that we are hearing from our constituents and from people across the province, but to make those concerns known to the federal government and see what happens with their legislation, because they very well may come out with similar legislation, which would supersede this legislation.

As I say, especially when you look at all the concerns out there, whether it's energy costs, the many, many health care concerns we have, transportation—as the northern critic, I could list many northern challenges: just trying to get some economic activity happening in the Ring of Fire, to mention one of them. So right off the bat, I wonder why the province is getting involved, why the McGuinty government is necessarily getting involved.

Secondly, if they are going to get involved, they did have a private member's bill, Bill 5. The member from Sault Ste. Marie put Bill 5 forward, and, as far as I understand it, it covered many of the same issues as this bill. Of course, as any bill could, it could be amended at committee. Well, the bill was actually at committee, so it's already ahead of this one. If you're going to go into this area, why not deal with Bill 5 that's already at committee? Of course, as has been pointed out by the previous speaker, the member from Kitchener—Conestoga, there are no committees right now, so until committees are re-formed, that wouldn't be possible.

I simply say there are lots of good objectives in here, but is the approach the government is taking with this just going to create more red tape, more regulations that may or may not benefit consumers? In the end, if it does cost a lot more—and I see figures where it could cost as

much as \$100 million. I don't know whether that's correct or not, but that's what I see is possible. That cost will be borne by consumers. All of us who have cell-phones and iPhones and data plans will end up paying it. And, as has been pointed out by organizations like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the cost of regulations and red tape—this is from a couple of years ago—is some \$11 billion a year in Ontario. That's a huge cost, and in the end consumers pay for it. So although the objective is good, it might end up just costing Ontario consumers a lot more. As I point out, we're already paying a lot for our cellphones and services, and this could end up being more costly.

I would simply say that the approach on many issues with the McGuinty government to do with regulation could be improved a lot. I think with any of us, when we get into our constituency and talk to small businesses, they'll tell you stories, one by one—and every one unique—about how regulations, although always well intended, make it harder for them to do their business and more expensive for them to do their business. So I say that this government needs to change its approach to the way it tries to regulate things and stop being so prescriptive, where it tries to think of everything that could possibly happen and write rules—reams and reams and reams of rules—to deal with every possible situation, and instead be more goal-oriented. Set the goals you want to achieve and then, those many rules that are out there—if you're a small business, it's impossible to know all the rules, absolutely impossible. There are so many rules. Whether you like it or not, you're going to end up breaking them because you're not aware of them.

So, number one, the government needs to communicate all these rules that they've created much more clearly, because I think it's true that the great majority of businesses out there are trying to obey the rules. They're not trying to break the rules; they just don't even know what they are. They could spend all day and night trying to comply and not be able to do it. So the government needs to communicate and make the rules more simple. They need to communicate the rules much more clearly and spend a lot more time communicating. All the various inspectors, of which we have lots in the provincial public service, should be more out there trying to educate businesses versus trying to be the police. Rather than showing up at a business's door and saying—it doesn't matter what inspector you are, whether you're the health inspector or the MOE inspector or labour inspector. The inspector should be showing up at the business with a goal of trying to help the businesses comply versus writing the citation for what they did wrong.

I will say from personal experience of being in business for 30 years, that's the way it used to be 30 years ago, having worked with fire inspectors and health inspectors in my past business of running a resort. It has changed. It has become—I don't think it has made the province a safer place but it sure has made it a lot harder for businesses, and a lot of them are afraid to do anything because an inspector shows up and they get charged with

something. They get charged with breaking some rule that they aren't even aware of. So I think we need to use a different approach.

The CRTC are working on something themselves on a national scale. I would suggest that it's better to have a national regulation that applies to the whole country versus just Ontario. You have these businesses—they're not doing business just in Ontario; they're doing business across the country. So, a simpler system with less duplication, from province to province, is going to, in the end, probably achieve the goals of this bill but be a lot more simple and, because of that, less costly for the consumers. I think that's probably what consumers out there want.

As I mentioned, if the federal government does pass a new law, it will supersede this bill, if it does come into place. There are some concerns, I would say, addressed in the bill that I do agree with. Having a simpler bill that tells you all about your plan is important, but you could get some unintended consequences with this bill. You could end up with 50 pages of details about your plan that 99.5% of the people aren't going to read. I think it's important that in the disclosure part of it, there needs to be something pretty simple, pretty straightforward that consumers will take the time to read and get the key points: what the total cost is going to be, how much total data they have, and anything else, any penalties that there might be—everything as clearly and succinctly as possible, those high-line, important points.

Winston Churchill, in the middle of World War II—it didn't matter if it was details about some new weaponry, if he got a report on it, it had to fit on one page. Well, I think you could apply the same to the description of your plan for your data and the plan for your cellphone, your mobile devices. At least the key points should be able to be on one page, and you can have further background on it so that people understand it and actually read it.

But some of the issues I do agree, from personal experience, need to be addressed, the costs that people aren't aware of. We've probably all, the first time at least, gone to the States or gone overseas and not bought a roaming plan or additional data plan. I know, just going to the States the first time many years ago and using a cellphone—being shocked when I arrived home at the size of the bill that I then faced, without really any disclosure. I don't think that's right. I think that consumers should be aware ahead of time and warned in any way possible about the fact that they're going to be ringing up bills worth hundreds, perhaps thousands, of dollars.

1550

Last year, we went to visit our daughter Renee, who's over in London, England, currently, and we went to Ireland for a week. We were using her iPhone for navigation. It turned out that her plan was a British plan; it didn't work in southern Ireland. Then we had to resort to using—we didn't have any paper maps; we were using my wife's iPhone. We had gone to the bother of making sure we bought an additional plan for Ireland, but what

we didn't realize was that we had only bought the voice part of it, not the data part. So when we checked and learned that, then we bought an additional data plan. You must use a lot of memory up when you're trying to use it as your main navigation device, but I don't think we had gone a day when we got a warning that we had exceeded our data limit.

I think it's important that consumers are aware, when they're using their mobile devices, of when they're going to end up facing huge bills. It's not fair that you use your device in travel or whatever and you get back and find out to your surprise that you've got a \$1,000 bill waiting for you on your arrival home.

If the goal is to have the best prices for consumers, which I think is what it should be about, then I think what we need to do is foster competition and do what we can to make it cheaper for businesses to do business in Ontario and Canada so that with that increased competition, consumers will get the best price for the available services.

We're seeing huge increases in the use of mobile devices. I'm sure we all in our lives are seeing great increases in use. I know I have some statistics here which I'll look at in a second—yes, data usage is doubling every seven months. That's a great increase. I think that will help foster competition as well, that increased use.

Another point this bill deals with is all-in pricing. I think that's a good idea. The idea of having a price that is the total price, including tax, including your data plan, including anything you might rack up, makes sense and is fair for consumers. But again, if you're looking at how do we make our world less complex and less expensive for businesses to do business here, why not have a rule for all-in pricing for anything, not just mobile devices, but plane tickets, cars and anything you sell? Why is that not possible? Then it would be uniform and the same for everybody, and perhaps cheaper for businesses to figure out, especially if they all understand that the price has to be the total price.

I must admit, I do wonder if this bill is a bit about optics. It's popular to be seen to be doing something. Everybody's got a cellphone, an iPhone or a BlackBerry—I happen to have a BlackBerry—and we all probably pay a lot for our services and we all think they cost more than they should. Anything the government is seen to be doing that looks like they're trying to protect consumers is going to be popular. I must admit, I do wonder if this bill is a bit about optics and the government trying to be seen to be doing something.

The member from Kitchener-Conestoga did bring up some good points. He talked about how in Bill 5, the bill put forward by the member from Sault Ste. Marie, there were actually some features that aren't covered in this bill—it's my understanding, and if he is correct—where unlocking the phone was required in Bill 5. So if you buy a phone somewhere, you can't be locked into a plan with, say, Bell or Rogers; you could choose whichever provider you wanted. I think that is something that consumers would certainly think is a positive thing, and this bill,

as I understand at this point, does not cover that. It could cover it, if it was amended at committee, but as was also pointed out by the member from Kitchener—Conestoga, there are no committees in the Legislature at this point. There may be one. The finance committee will be recalled shortly when the government stops stalling and forms that committee, as has been ordered by a motion in the House that passed recently. But otherwise there are no committees. I certainly hope that the government does form the committees soon.

I know that I was involved with the public accounts committee through the spring and for seven full days in the summertime as well. It's work that is midway through its process, looking at the Auditor General's special report on Ornge. I simply say it would be a shame to waste all the work that has been done by all the committee members, and a lot of time, by not reconvening the committees, as was the case last year, until February. The sooner they're reconvened, the better.

In the case of the public accounts committee, we spent from February until September looking into the Auditor General's special report on Ornge. It would be nice to complete that before the Auditor General comes out with his next report, which is toward the end of this year. That is the only thing the public accounts committee has done this year. We didn't get a chance to look at any of the other sections of last year's Auditor General's report.

I think the longer the time goes before committees are formed, the less value that work has, and there has been a lot of time and effort spent on it. So I do hope the government gets the committees going sooner versus later. Of course, for this bill, that would give an opportunity to make some modifications to it in committee.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I do wonder in particular why the government is really jumping the gun when the federal government is engaged with looking at this issue right now. Why not participate in their process, make some good suggestions—some of the points I have mentioned—so here's a good federal bill that applies across the whole country? That will be better for businesses doing business and, as a result, will be better for consumers as well. I think that would be a positive thing.

One of the big frustrations out there, certainly, is customer service, and this bill is not going to do anything with customer service. I think competition really provides an opportunity for the better companies to provide better service and therefore earn more market share through their good service. As I mentioned, I think all-in pricing would make more sense if it applied to all businesses, not just one small segment here.

There could be some unintended consequences with this bill too. Auto-renewals are banned, meaning that the consumer will no longer become a month-to-month customer when their term is up. This means they will lose the favourable conditions they liked in their old contract because some of the deals will not be available two years down the road. So consumers could be faced with a sudden cut-off or with the headache of having to find another contract and sign it.

In my last minute, many of this bill's principles are very good, but they could apply to a broad range of industries rather than specifically to mobile devices. I think it could be much broader. There are some good points, though, especially consumer protection and not being surprised with cancellation fees—I know the bill limits cancellation fees to some \$50. I think a lot of consumers do feel they're tied in and maybe didn't understand the agreement when they signed a three-year contract and then find they can't break it. That is something worth looking at.

In conclusion, I just worry that the result of this could be more red tape and more costs to consumers, even though the goal is to provide consumer protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much to my colleague for his extensive comments and thoughts on this bill. I should begin by agreeing with my colleague with respect to the fact that consumer protection is much needed. The bill has certain elements that are welcome and are certainly a step in the right direction to providing some protection for consumers. Particularly with wireless services being a new service, a new area of technology, it's an area where I don't think we've turned our minds to enough protection in terms of the consumer. I think it's important that we are turning our minds to it now.

1600

There are some great points particularly when it comes to disclosure. I think consumers should know what they're getting into, they should know exactly what the costs are that are going to be associated with their service. I think that should have been a requirement before and I'm glad to see that being a requirement now.

I agree with the member from Parry Sound that we could expand this to provide broader protection for other areas—not simply wireless services, but other telecommunication services—this type of disclosure requirement and a broader sense of protection where the consumers could benefit in other areas as well.

In addition, looking strictly at the wireless services, there's an area—and my colleague and I were just speaking about this—roaming charges are a considerable cost where people are often left unaware of how many minutes they have, what the costs will be. If they do get a package added on for international use, often it's unclear how many minutes are used, and the cellphone provider doesn't provide an update of how many minutes you have left. If that requirement was placed to allow the consumer to gauge how many minutes they have left, or how many megabytes are left if it's an international roaming package added on, that would certainly give a great deal of protection to consumers so they wouldn't come back to see this extremely large cellphone bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To begin with, I would like to thank the members from Parry Sound—Muskoka and Bramalea—Gore—Malton for their comments.

Coming back to the comments from the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka: He's right. He said communication is in the federal jurisdiction, but consumer protection is a matter for provinces only. Four other provinces, such as Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia, have introduced similar provisions.

While my colleague the Minister of Consumer Services was developing this bill, they consulted the industry and the message was very clear: that as long as we follow the same provisions that the other four provinces have introduced, they are fine. Having the same provisions will encourage greater industry compliance. This will ultimately benefit the consumers. What is this bill? This bill is all about strengthening consumer protection.

The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka spoke about nationwide regulation. I want to make it clear to this House that the initial announcement made by the CRTC was to hold consultations. Our ministry, our government, tabled this bill in the month of May—only then, as a matter of fact. The CRTC announced something seriously after we tabled that legislation.

So once again, I said it earlier and I'm reiterating again that this bill is all about strengthening consumer protection so they can benefit from this bill and they can make informed decisions and smart choices. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to rise and speak to my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka. He raised a lot of very valuable points, and I think the general consensus is that there's some good stuff in this bill, but really, we had Bill 5 already there. Now we're taking this one. It's a federal regulation that really—within eight days they came up with this thing. So part of me says, again, why are we even talking about it? Why are we not going and reviewing, once the federal government has put their regulation in place—looking at it and reviewing it and really being efficient and sensible about this? The other side is, we think we can probably support pieces of it, but it needs to go to committee. But once again, there are no committees to take this to.

We've spent six hours already debating this. I think it could have been done, to be honest. It could have been collapsed. We're going to spend however many more hours talking about this, rather than talking about things like the deficit and jobs and the gas plant waste that we've encountered and the associated contempt motion. Speaker, it makes you wonder why we have to continue to do this waste and duplication, and spending very valuable time when there are much more pressing needs out there.

The other thing with this bill is it does not address fairly significant things. The high price is what I hear from people in my riding. They want to talk about customer protection and customer service that they're not getting. They want to talk about the unlocking provisions. So there are a lot of things that are still suspect in this bill, and I think it really reflects again—we're trying

to over-regulate and over-administrate, and sometimes I think we have to be cautious where we're going with all this red tape and regulation, and what's the real cost to the taxpayer, the person who's paying the freight, in this case the user?

I think we just have to always be putting in mind that this needs to be a strong, national program. It needs to have national, consistent standards. I'm not certain this bill fully addresses that. It is a federal regulation, and yet we continue to talk about these things, at the risk of not talking about jobs, the deficit, debt reduction and spending reduction.

Speaker, I'm concerned that we continue to bring these types of things and not talk about the more pressing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Listening to my colleague opposite here with regard to the rules and the red tape and the complications of why we're discussing this bill today and the reasons we're here—we could be discussing more important things, and absolutely that has some validity. However, this is very important because I think probably everyone in this House has a cellphone; perhaps your children also have a cellphone. These are affecting our everyday lives. It has now become part of us, a communication tool, and without communication we're not going to get things accomplished.

Having agreements that have clarity, that have common language, that have disclosure on fees will make people feel more trusting when they're going in to purchase a cellphone. I know that when I go to buy a product—a stove, fridge, whatever the case may be—I'm relying on that sales representative to portray that information to me, to explain it so I can make an informed, knowledgeable decision.

When we're talking about a cellphone, again, many people consider it as a lifeline. There could be emergency reasons why you need it. So when you have those roaming charges and you're not aware of what that cost is or how many minutes you have left, that leaves people upset. When you get that \$900 bill, you're picking up the phone and you're yelling at somebody on the other end because you didn't like the service or you didn't know. Knowledge is power, and us having knowledge of what that contract entails is going to make people smarter when they're picking up cellphones.

Speaker, just a little fact here: Complaints about cellphones and long distance charges consistently appear on the Ministry of Consumer Services annual list of the top 10 consumer complaints.

Absolutely there are a lot more important issues we need to talk about, but this is certainly on people's minds. It's an everyday tool that we use now as part of our lifestyle. Consumers need the respect of knowing what that contract entails when they purchase that agreement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for questions and comments. I return to the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka to reply.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members who commented, the members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Mississauga–Brampton South, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and London–Fanshawe.

Mr. Speaker, as was pointed out, just about all of us use some sort of mobile device. In fact, now 13% of households don't have a land line, as the member from Simcoe North just pointed out to me. So it is a business that's growing tremendously and we all make great use of our devices. I think we've all been surprised by roaming charges or contracts that have been difficult to get out of, so there is work that needs to be done.

I would simply say, for consumers and for businesses, that it makes more sense—particularly with the history; this is an area that's traditionally federally regulated. It makes more sense to have one national plan across the whole country, where companies that do business across the whole country know the rules for the whole country versus having this patchwork. There are now four different sets of rules for four different provinces. That just makes it more complicated for companies to do business, and that makes it more expensive. I have an estimate here that it could cost, for this bill, \$100 million per operator. I don't know whether that's right or not, but that's the number I have written down here, and if that is right, that's a little scary because consumers will pay for it in the end. I think we all want to see consumers getting a better deal, not having to pay more for their mobile devices and services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 82 this afternoon, the consumer protection bill, the Wireless Services Agreements Act.

1610

Mr. Speaker, I found this bill a little bit interesting. I hadn't done a lot of comments on it up until this point. However, there are a couple of things that immediately I want to comment on.

First of all, it's the whole area around the federal legislation with CRTC and how we blend this into that legislation, because there's continual work going on with CRTC, as we know, with new approvals, the transmission etc., the things that we hear from the CRTC. My concern here, first of all, is that, yes, consumer protection—I think it's the responsibility of every government to make sure that our taxpayers are protected. However, with the federal issues, and then the concerns around Bill 5, the Oraziotti bill, which I thought seemed like fairly reasonable legislation at the time, through private members' time—I felt that that was sort of the first step. Suddenly we've got this bill that's going to be the provincial end of it.

With that being said, I'm concerned about, first of all, the overall cost of implementing this and who actually does that at the provincial level. I'd love to hear these answers. That's why I'm so concerned that with the bill, as we move it forward—I guess we're getting near the

end of debate here. That's why it is so, so important that this bill go to committee. I think we've heard different speakers say that, both in the questions and comments and in their statements here in the House today.

As the member from Muskoka–Parry Sound mentioned just a couple of minutes ago, there are a lot of people—the whole area around cellphones, iPhones, BlackBerrys etc., is growing at an enormous pace in the whole world. My son just bought a new place and he doesn't even have a land line. His whole group of friends and neighbours etc., they're all using computers, and everything is wireless. I believe there is, as Mr. Miller mentioned, something like 13% or 14% of people today who don't even have a land line in their home.

We can see why there is a need for the consumer protection. However, how does that fit into who enforces this and what those actual impacts will be? That's why, in committee, it will be so important to find out from all of the different stakeholders, including the carriers etc., the people who build the phones etc.—that's why it will be so important to get to them.

The problem we've got, Mr. Speaker, is we have no place to send this bill right now; we haven't since September 10, and here we are, with all kinds of important information. Just a week ago, we voted against the bill for the home renovation tax credit. Well, we have no place to send these bills. In my local media—because I voted against it, I was chastised by the Minister of Health for voting against it, and we have no place to send it anyhow. It's the same with all of these things. I look at the public accounts committee. I mean, I think it's really important. This place right now is almost dysfunctional without the committee system put in place. We're now into, what, 33 or 34 days without a committee here, and it looks like there are no plans for it.

Certainly, public accounts—I'd love to know a lot more about the air ambulance system. I thought that was a lot of good debate during the summer. The committee structure worked. I think the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, who chairs that committee, had seven straight days. I think the media were paying a lot of attention to it. I know my constituents at home would certainly love to know a lot more about the money that was spent at air ambulance and where it's ended up and what the impacts will be and what the investigations will be—will the OPP be involved?—all those sorts of things. I hear nothing about that.

The estimates committee is where the whole issue started around the contempt motion and the information that didn't flow. I have an opportunity—and that's why I want these bills to go to committee, including this one here, as soon as possible; I was up next on the list for estimates as one of the people questioning the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on the colleges of trade. I have, like, 150 questions to ask this guy in estimates. I can't even get it there. They're not meeting. There's no estimates committee. That all ends on November 19. There will be no more estimates after November 19. How many more weeks will it be before we even have another estimates committee this year?

We understand that the finance committee is obligated to meet, under that motion that we passed in this House, and apparently it will. In my understanding—I hope it's going to meet by the end of next week. That's when the 10 sessional days are up, and I'm not sure if we're going to meet or not. Is there going to be some way of delaying that? Is there something new, or something in the standing orders that will allow the government to delay it? I'm hoping that will happen, but where are the House leaders and when are we going to see the committees return?

We spent a lot of time in our committee—I chaired Legislative Assembly in the last session, and we did a lot of work on that committee. Mr. Bisson was there, and a number of members from the Liberal caucus and our own caucus: Ms. MacLeod, Mr. Clark. We had a lot of valuable input towards looking at changing the standing orders. It's dead. It's gone. It's gone dead, and we have nothing to go to. This committee is exactly the same. The Wireless Services Agreements Act: I'm not sure if it'll even get to committee.

Here we are debating, trying to put out positive form, positive input, positive suggestions, but you know what? I could never support this bill unless it's amended. There's absolutely going to have to be a lot of amendments made to this legislation before I could support it. I just see way too many unanswered questions. The real question here in the House today, Mr. Speaker: When will we get to the committees?

I would love for some of the government members or maybe the House leader to stand up and say, "Hey, if this bill passes second reading right away, we'll see this committee meeting next week on it"—a certain committee. That's the kind of concern we've got right now.

Then you've got the whole idea of the private member's bill. We had Bill 5, Mr. Oraziotti's bill, that apparently was quite good. It was stuck in committee, and again, we have no committees. Over and over again, you can talk until you're blue in the face around this place, but the reality is that we're sitting here, almost dysfunctional, because we don't have a committee structure in place. That's kind of a sad state, especially when you look at what's happening in the province today.

The Minister of Finance tried to paint such a rosy picture today. My God, it almost made me sick to my stomach. But we're still going into debt at \$1.9 million an hour. That's the way I calculate it out. I see people that can't pay their hydro bills. I don't know where all these jobs that he's creating are; I see companies closing down every day. I see irresponsible hydro bills.

I got a call on the weekend—you're talking about government oversight, the government keeping a close eye on the tabs of the cellphone companies, but the mayor of the township where I live, Mayor Mike Burkett, is trying to find out some answers on the solar farms. The Ministry of the Environment's staff won't call him, and the Ontario Power Authority people won't call him back. They won't return his calls or his emails. That's

shameful. Why would they not return a call? He's a guy that needs to know this information, because people are wanting to build these solar farms and the legal advice the municipality has got is that these things are bad news, because the sole responsibility is put on the municipality. The government hasn't taken any—who's responsible for that? The government passes legislation, the Green Energy Act, and some poor taxpayer is going to be paying for the problems with it in the future, when some of the companies go broke and that sort of thing. That's the kind of thing he's trying to find out.

As we move forward with Bill 82, we're going to probably end debate here this afternoon on it, but the reality is, we have a long way to go. It might be a consumer protection bill, but who allows the government to go back to committee, and who protects the consumer against the government? That's what the problem really is here, in a lot of cases.

I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words. I'm hoping I can find out in the comments and questions that come back from the government when the committees are going to return, because everybody is asking me that. I get asked that every day back in the riding, like in the constit week last week, and I said, "The place is dysfunctional, because we don't have a committee system." It's something like a banana republic. We're just sitting here debating things and we're not having a committee.

Thank you very much for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this, and I look forward to the questions and comments coming from, particularly, the government members as they tell me how wrong I am and that the committee structure is going to be in place by next week and we can get a lot of these things, like estimates—Legislative Assembly can return, and public accounts, and we can get the minister in on the finance committee. Things are going to be really great. I hope they're going to say that in their comments and questions. Thank you very much.

1620

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Certainly I've listened to my colleagues here today and in other sessions on this issue over the past couple of weeks. It is an important issue to protect consumers. I think, though, that the bill doesn't necessarily go far enough, because I think consumers also need protection with their home phones. In fact, they're finding themselves in these kinds of contracts with penalties around home phone situations, with their Internet, with their television. I actually experienced that in the last week, when I entered into a contract on my home phone and had to take a three-year contract with a \$20-a-month penalty in order to get some relief from the bill. I would have had to pay \$150 a month as opposed to \$75 or \$80 a month by entering into a three-year contract. When I asked, "Well, we're in a minority government here. Who knows when we might have an election? I may not even be here in Toronto," the answer was, "You're still on the hook for \$360 for this phone," which

is really not right. People should be able to get out of that.

The member from London-Fanshawe spoke about people needing cellphones for emergency situations, and I've also experienced that, where my phone actually got cut off because I was over the \$300 mark, with no notification, no email, no phone call to say, "You've got 10 minutes left." It is possible to do it. For example, if any of you have OnStar in your vehicle, they notify you when you're at the 10-minute mark. Somebody actually phones you and says, "You have 10 minutes left in your package. Would you like to add some time?" I think that if OnStar can do it, certainly the big carriers, the big companies can let you know how many megabytes you have left so that you're not incurring roaming charges.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: This certainly is about protection of consumers, which is a priority for our government. And while telecommunications is an area of federal jurisdiction, consumer contracts do fall under provincial jurisdiction, and that is precisely the reason we have addressed this issue.

It is encouraging to see that the CRTC has stated its intention to hold consultations on the state of wireless competition in Canada, but they have not yet publicly confirmed any intention of regulating wireless services sector contracts with the consumer. That's what we are trying to do here, as other provinces have done as well.

I would also like to say that Bill 82 does provide authority to make regulations dealing with notice of roaming charges, and also requires full disclosure of whether a phone is locked, how long it will remain locked, whether the supplier will unlock it and for what fees.

The Wireless Services Agreements Act that is proposed also has stronger protection for consumers and remedies than were in Bill 5. It would create offences for suppliers who bill consumers for payments based on invalid renewals, amendments or extensions. It will also allow consumers to recoup three times the amount charged, if consumers are required to enforce their right for a refund.

This Wireless Services Agreements Act is very important to consumers because it relates to the cost of a lot of these things that have been addressed in this particular proposed legislation. It will give consumers a tool they can rely on to help them in ensuring that they have the kind of services they need with respect to their cellphone devices.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to say that the purpose of the legislation is clearly consumer protection and regulation of disclosure and similar obligations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely a privilege to stand and comment on my colleague from Simcoe North. With your indulgence, I'd actually

like to give him another 10 minutes, because he was just getting there and getting wound up, and he was absolutely right in the points he made. You can see why he is so popular in his riding, because he's out with the people all the time, listening to them and bringing their concerns back here.

I think what he said extremely well was how concerned his residents are about the committees, where we really should be taking stuff like this to do the amendments. He stated that we couldn't support this bill without a lot of amendments, and I fully support what he was saying there, but again to his point, there's no committee to take this to. In this House already we've spent six hours debating this bill when we've already heard it's a federal regulation. They're reviewing it; they're going to be putting it out. If anything, this is an industry that does cut across our great country. We need a national policy. We need to see that, take it back to committee and amend it significantly before we go any further, but we don't have a single committee struck.

I find it very interesting that the government of the day, continually, every day in question period, says we're the obstructionists, that we don't want to do anything; we're holding up this House. We're here ready to work. We want to take this—this thing should have already been at committee being discussed. We shouldn't be waiting and debating and discussing here when there are so many other, more important things. These gas plant fiascos are what people want to hear about. We want to bring a committee so we can bring people and hold them to account. We should be talking about the deficit. The Minister of Finance stood up today and said everything is rosy in the province of Ontario. Well, I can tell you that those people in my riding that can't afford to pay their hydro bills and are wondering where the next paycheque is, or, in the case of the horse racing industry, are wondering where the job is going to be when they decimate that one, are asking us to do more. They are saying there's a lot more opportunity out there.

There is a better way, and we are here to do that. We're here to ensure that we hold that government to task.

This is a bill that needs a lot of work. There's merit in some of the things they're saying, but it definitely needs a committee so we can get there and ask the questions, not only on this, but about a lot of things like the gas plants and the Ornge fiasco.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I don't think there's any doubt in anyone's mind that cell customers, mobile phone customers, deserve protection. I think my colleague from Welland has talked about the need for broader protection with telecommunications for people with their home phones, certainly making sure people know that when they are going to be stuck with roaming charges, they know how big those are—that there is regulation that protects consumers who, frankly, pay an awful lot for their mobile devices. They pay an awful lot.

We think it would be a good idea for this bill to go to committee. We think that stakeholders should be given the opportunity to come and speak, set down their concerns, set out some amendments, and in the end actually assemble a bill that is going to serve the people of Ontario. But as you well know, Speaker, there are no committees. So we can debate this bill, I don't know, another week, another two weeks, but with no committees, decisions taken here, let's say to send it to committee, just mean that it gets sent into orbit, that nothing happens.

It's always an interesting thing for those of us in the chamber to talk about a bill and its impact on the people of Ontario, but the people of Ontario actually expect that when it moves out of this chamber, it moves into a committee where something happens. It's time for the government to sit down with the other House leaders and sort out the mechanism of this Legislature so that legislation actually comes to something in the end and is not just the subject of an interesting debate on a Monday afternoon between a bunch of elected officials, but actually has an impact on peoples' lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments, and we return to the member for Simcoe North for his two-minute response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the member from Welland, the Minister of Consumer Services, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and the member from Toronto-Danforth for their comments.

I think they just summed it up. No one came back to me with the gist of my—the intent of my comments was to reinforce the fact that we have no committees. The guy that jumped out of the helium balloon yesterday, that Felix guy, has got more substance to him right now than we have in this Parliament, because at least he jumped out, he landed, and he was a success. We're sort of in free-fall here, because we can debate this thing, like the member from Toronto-Danforth said, and we can bring out some great points here in this, but if we can't go to committee to make amendments to it, we're defeating the whole purpose of the Legislature.

I thought the government, when we had a minority—it's a very close minority; we know that. But it's still a minority, and if we want to make this place work, we have to have some kind of cooperation, and the cooperation has to come in the form of things like letting the committees sit. That's our job here. We come down here and we only have question period and debate period after that. You can read a few petitions, you can maybe do a statement or two, but the reality is that all of us want to be on a committee. We enjoy the committees; they're the backbone of a parliamentary system—and we are now about 35 days without a committee. I'm not sure how the minister feels about not having a committee for her bill to go to. It's nice for everybody to sit here and debate, but the reality is there's no place to send it.

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What's critical for this Parliament this week is for the government to come back to the House leaders, get this

thing under way, make sure that we have actual committees to sit that are constructive and see if we can actually make this Parliament work for a few months. I'm hesitant about that actually happening, but the reality is that that's the only way we can expect positive results on any of this legislation, when those committees are back and we can actually do some work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to stand up and talk about G82, although, as already mentioned, the debate has been extensive and it would be great if it could go to committee. As one of the newest people here in the House, I'd like to work on a committee. People tell me that's where the work gets done, so I'd like to get to work.

You know what else I'd like to see? If this committee actually got called and we got the chance to actually talk about and expand, amend and edit this bill to the betterment of the people of the province, we actually would see a lot of youth come to that committee, because they're the ones with the cellphones; they're the ones who are not protected. There is a real lack of transparency in these contracts that are being signed by youth. So there is definitely a need to address consumer rights, for sure, and a clear disclosure of what those contracts are like, because more and more young people have phones. Some of them have two or three phones. We're seeing more and more people in the province of Ontario not actually have a land line in their residence. It's quite something, actually; right now, all they have are cellphones.

Certainly, the NDP has some genuine concerns about addressing the need to limit contract termination fees. You should not be left hanging. If you're not getting good customer service from your cellphone company, you should not be penalized extensively. This is one way that you create quality control in the consumer business: If the company is not actually providing you with half-decent service, then you terminate the contract.

Interjection: So many areas have no service.

Ms. Catherine Fife: So many areas have no service, as you rightly point out.

Under the new act, providers will need to give the customer a written contract that clearly explains the charges that they are signing up for in a manner that is easy for customers to understand. As I have already said, in a lot of those circumstances, it's the youth who are being left on the hook—and sometimes their parents; I know, from some personal experience.

I'd like to see the committees struck. I'd like to see us get to work on this kind of legislation—

Mr. Robert Bailey: We'd like to see you on one.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, I'd like to get to work—and I look forward to the debate. But as has already been mentioned, I'd rather get to committee and get to work on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Norm Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. She said that in the committee, there will be lots of youth; not only youth. Seniors are also using cellphones and all these modern devices. Two weeks before, I was in my riding at an Internet event where they taught seniors how to use these computer and wireless devices. I was surprised to see that seniors were so smart and they were all linking to their devices and how they were operating them. I think we all remember a few weeks before when the iPhone 5 was introduced, the latest version, and there was a long lineup from the youth to be the first one to pick up that device.

Mr. Speaker, it's very important that we provide protection to the consumers, and this bill is all about protecting consumers, strengthening consumers so that they can make informed decisions and smart choices. I'm looking forward to seeing this bill go to committee so that we can do more debate there. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Norm Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'll just take a few minutes to comment on the comments from the new member from Kitchener–Waterloo. Basically, this bill is kind of superseding the bill from the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who came out with a bill months earlier, ahead of the minister, on the same topic. I'm not sure why the caucus and cabinet can't talk amongst themselves and come up with a single plan for Ontario when, in fact, they're now competing with one another.

The main thing is, both bills have some good ideas and both bills have some bad ideas, but it would be nice to sit down and discuss and merge the two bills into a bill that is proper for the consumers of Ontario; the problem being, though, that we could pass this bill today, but there's no committee for this bill to go to to have that discussion, to have the stakeholders' input, to have the merging of the bills. This government opposite us has failed Ontarians in creating committees so that we can get the business done that needs to be done for Ontario as a whole.

Ontario is in a \$13.8-billion or \$13-billion deficit—whatever the government number of the day is—and we have no committees to get to work to get us back on the path to prosperity. That is why we feel that you can pass all the bills you want in this House, but until the government gets off their duff and forms these committees and gets these bills through, Ontario is going to go deeper and deeper into debt; the deficits are going to do nothing but increase. As shown in today's projection from the Minister of Finance, next year's deficit is going up to \$14.8 billion, I believe.

The call on this—this bill is great. The member from Sault Ste. Marie has a great bill. Let's merge them together, but for Pete's sake, let's form some committees and get some work done here. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I have to say, I very much enjoyed the speech from the new member from

Kitchener–Waterloo. She's grasped the essence of what's going on here: Young people are paying an awful lot for their mobile phones, and frankly, those young people want this issue to be dealt with before they become seniors. They're very hopeful that this will be referred to committee sometime in the next decade so that in fact it can be debated and acted on. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo makes a very strong point. She came here to do the business of the people of Ontario. She would like to be in committee when this bill comes forward so she can hear what the public has to say, so she can work with the government, the opposition, to actually reshape the bill so that it meets the needs of the people in this province. She has no interest in waiting another year or two years, or whatever it's going to take for this bill to come forward. She believes we need committees in place now so we can actually do the work of the Legislature. She made the point strongly.

People watching this debate should know that right now there is only a precipice for this bill to be pushed over. There is no committee system there as a net to catch it when we finish debating. Perhaps that's why this debate continues on and on, because the government well knows that pushing the bill into the abyss won't be viewed kindly. So they're just marking time, taking up the Legislature's precious hours while the government decides whether or not it wants a committee system.

We need committees, we need to carry forward the debate, as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has done. Get on with the business of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I quite enjoyed the speech delivered by my friend the new member from Kitchener–Waterloo, and I certainly welcome her to the Ontario Legislature. I happen to know her mother and father, who reside in Peterborough, extremely well. In fact, her mother, Sheila, for many, many years, was the executive director of the Downtown Business Improvement Area in Peterborough, and certainly, Sheila was considered one of the outstanding people who have held that job over the years. She was very dedicated, very innovative, and I see those same traits in the new member from Kitchener–Waterloo, and I can tell you many people in Peterborough are very proud that she's now joined us here in this riding.

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Interesting enough, Bill 82 is timely. My son, Braden, who's 14, and my daughter, Shanae, who's 13, had some people over to the house on the weekend. They've got these BlackBerry's and iPhones and all these things, and they were having a chat about the cost of operating these programs. My wife and I were sort of struck when we started to hear some of the numbers of what these contracts are all about. I said to them that I could give them some insight on what's currently going on here at Queen's Park with Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile

device. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, I almost got a standing ovation from the kids on the weekend when I told them, these 13- and 14-year-olds, how we're going to bring this bill forward—in co-operation with the official opposition and indeed the third party—to bring in some protection.

So the 13- and 14-year-olds of the province of Ontario will be able to have contracts that will be written in plain language, and they'll know what the contracts spell out and services to come. Let me tell you, all of those 13- and 14-year-olds in the province of Ontario will welcome this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for her reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to thank the members from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Toronto–Danforth and, of course, Peterborough. The member from Peterborough mentioned my mother, who was the president of the downtown BIA, and that's another segment of the population that has concerns around the lack of transparency around cellphones and the billing process. And those are big numbers; when you add up all the teenagers and the extensive billing, and the lack of transparency around that billing, I think that you would be astounded by that number. But when you factor in the business and the economic factors around cellphones and the lack of transparency around billing, then you have some very real issues. This really gets to some of the work that we need to address.

As critic for economic development, you want to put every piece in place to ensure that the economy gets stronger, that we get people back to work, that we have a real and honest conversation about the reality of the economy in the province of Ontario. We are a long way from having that conversation, and certainly we're a long way from actually doing the hard work that we need to do to ensure that there is real and true transparency around billing around cellphones.

All you have to do is look at the people who have supported this proposed bill. You have the Consumers Council of Canada who have endorsed it. You have a key 2010 survey from the New America Foundation's Open Technology Institute comparing wireless plans and packages from around the world. They found that the Canadian consumers pay the highest minimum monthly charge for cellphone services out of the 11 countries in the report.

It's true, as has already been mentioned, that there is a need for federal leadership on this, but that doesn't preclude us as the Ontario Legislature, as local representatives in our own ridings, from taking some action, from doing something. We would like to do something; we just need those committees to get in place so that we can sit down and we can hammer out a strong plan for consumers around cellphone bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I find it interesting that the government at the six-hour mark, after you acknowledged, wanted to continue this debate, yet none of them rise to actually speak to it. Once again, waste, waste and a bit more waste. I guess we'll continue on, because we are here to do a job, despite the fact that we have no committees to really take this to, to amend as is needed and actually move it through. It's very frustrating. My colleague from Simcoe North really expressed that in his comments. I think we all really need to reflect on what we are doing here and why the government of the day continues to hold off and not allow us to move on with the more pressing needs.

Just before I get into my more formal comments, the member from Peterborough, a very well-regarded member, made a comment that kind of struck me. He said he was struck that he didn't really understand the cost of these cellphones these days, and I have to agree with him. I have a couple of teenagers as well, and it scares me. But where I want to take this little bit, Speaker, is that I'm concerned that he may also be struck with a lot of the decisions his government is making and the cost that's going to happen to those taxpayers in his riding of Peterborough, but also my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and across this province.

What's the cost going to be as a result of this \$750-million or perhaps billion-dollar boondoggle with the Mississauga gas plant that we're hearing about, Speaker? And is he struck with a 56% increase in energy costs over the next five years because of his government's decision to plow forward with this Green Energy Act experiment that they have gotten us into and don't seem to have the good wisdom and conscience to step up and say, "We've made yet another mistake"?

I think he'll probably be still be struck even more with the costs that are going to be related to other boondoggles: the gas plants that I've referenced; Ornge, another \$700-million little boondoggle there that's going to cost you, me and everyone else who is paying the bills a lot of money; the eHealth billion-dollar boondoggle. Speaker, it's almost laughable if it wasn't so sad, and the fact that our people, our hard-working taxpayers in this great province are saddled with all of this and they're going without health care and better education. There is a better way, and I suggest our party is holding them accountable to ensure there's a better way going forward.

I'll return to this act and I'll give the minister her due. I think there's an effort here to cap cancellation fees, to prevent automatic contract renewals and to provide clarity and transparency to cellphone and wireless contracts. Those are all admirable and I think that is—it's her duty, to be honest, as consumer services minister. I think those are good, but there are an awful lot of other things in this act that we definitely need to amend and we need to take those to a committee where we actually can do those amendments.

It shouldn't be lost, I think, on the people out there listening and those who will follow this matter that the federal government—the CRTC is in fact charged with

doing this. Mobile phone services are a national need, they are across the whole country, so why would we not let them do their deliberation and then take it back to one of our committees, if we ever strike those? I think the new member from Kitchener–Waterloo—hopefully she'll still be here in five or 10 years when they get to that point, maybe.

Speaker, we need to get those to a committee and ensure that we're actually truly reviewing them. But it is a national matter. Why don't we have some consistency? Why don't we have some national, consistent standards? If my son chooses to move to one of those other provinces, you would think that you would have the same rules and regulations apply. Why do we have to take this thing and make it more complicated than it already is? What we need to be ensuring is that these things are simplistic and we're not wasting valuable time and resources overregulating, creating red tape, creating yet another bill that's going to be 30 pages when other provinces are already leading the way. Why can't we just actually say, "You know what? Let's move this to the committee. Let's ramp it up, get it done and get it into the process?"

But you know what? We can't do that with a lot of the things that we need to do today, Speaker, because we do not have committees. This government continues to thwart the efforts of this whole chamber. We were all duly elected to represent all the people of Ontario and I would suggest to you that we, on this side of the House, and the members of the third party are here prepared to do that. We hold the government accountable, to say, "Where are these committees? Why will you not move forward?"

There's lots of rhetoric every day in the media, in question period, speaking to members outside: "We want to work together for the betterment of Ontarians. There's a better way." Speaker, there is a better way, but they are holding up this House. They are holding up democracy by not allowing it to happen.

The member from London–Fanshawe said that we need to be debating and this is a very important matter. I don't think she was necessarily arguing that I didn't say that, and that's not what I said. What I was more meaning is that this can be done in a much more expedited way. It is a very important matter; I concur with her 100%. On the other hand, the CRTC and anything the federal government is going to do is going to supersede. We've already spent six, probably now eight and a half valuable hours when we could have been talking about our finances and how we reduce spending and how we create jobs across this great province, how we get ourselves out of the massive debt that in eight years they have assembled. More than the rest of our whole province's history, they've doubled that debt, Speaker.

I want to push back a little bit, but I'm not arguing that it's not a very important matter that we need to be speaking about. I 100% agree it is the way of the future. I'm saying, why are we doing it today when we can't take it to a committee and truly effect and amend what's

needed—and there are lots of amendments that need to happen in there.

We need to definitely not be creating red tape and regulation. I don't want to be overly partisan, but I need to throw this out there. I think the party opposite continues to grab on to things that aren't really that sensitive and needed and they put more red tape and more regulation just to deflect away from the real issues that they're not managing well. Again, I go back to the gas plant fiasco; I go back to the simplistic democracy in this House and the contempt motion that we can't even seem to get by yet.

There are things there that we need to be doing, Mr. Speaker, that we could be spending our time on, I would suggest, more valuably. You stood up in this chamber and asked at the six-hour mark, as is required, "Is there further debate?" They said, "Yes, there's more debate." But now, they've all sat on their hands. They need to get off their duff and debate it at least, even though they know it's not going to come to committee—thanks for that quote, my friend and colleague from Middlesex.

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We need to be doing the right things in this House and get away from the rhetoric. A couple of the members have now said that we need to actually be working collectively and collaboratively and moving things forward on behalf of the province. I'm definitely a big believer in that. There's also the cost of \$100 million that I'm hearing out there rippling through. Who's going to pay that freight back again to the consumer, who we're supposedly, with this bill, trying to protect?

I think we need to ensure that in this House we're always moving forward with bills of importance. There are lots of things that we could be discussing, but we need to prioritize a little bit more. We need to be talking about job creation, not decimating industries like horse racing and getting rid of 30,000 or 60,000 jobs. We need to be talking about how we reduce the record deficit that's coming at us. The finance minister stood in this House today and released the document that I believe most of us have in our hands here today. You know, to hear him, we're just rolling along and everything is wonderful, although we're adding \$1.4 billion to the deficit next year.

Now, I'm not certain, but the path I think we should be on, if I was the Minister of Finance, would be reining in that deficit as quickly as I can, cutting spending and getting us back to the point before the government unfortunately puts us in a position where we'll get another downgrade, interest rates start to ramp up and we really start to feel the pinch of all that's going on. Every time he stands in this House, it's someone else's issues. "It's global, it's somebody else, we're in a terrible—it's everybody else but me taking responsibility."

I think we have to sometimes get back to the point. We can't over-regulate and treat everybody like Premier Dad wants to. At some point, we have to accept responsibility and ensure that we are doing the right things and, as adults, accept responsibility. We can over-regulate

ourselves to death and get nowhere. All we do is spin and spin and spin with rhetoric and red tape and unnecessary administration and bureaucracy.

Ontario should be—I mean, the BlackBerry: Most of us carry these wonderful inventions that were made right here in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, Canada—a leader of the world. We should be doing things that are making this company continue to be a leader, to have good investment and innovation in their marketing, in their products. We should be debating those types of things. How do we create tax decreases so those companies want to continue to move forward and have the ability to move forward? We shouldn't be talking about the things in here that are rhetoric when again, it's a federal regulation and spending all of this endless time.

Why aren't they coming forward and debating with us on why won't they set up the committees so that we could actually move these bills? If they're so serious and want to make improvement and change, why can't we get to that committees stage? Why can't we have committees struck so that we can actually debate, move forward and get it on to the agenda so the actual true taxpayer does get protection and service at the end of the day? Why have we been in this House for the last, I think, 35 days without committees? I would have to ask that—and yet we want to keep pushing a bill that really will be superseded by a federal regulation anyway. I mean, yes, we definitely have to have our input from Ontario's perspective, but we could be talking about deficit and debt reduction. We could be asking questions about who made the decision to cancel those gas plants that are going to cost the very taxpayer we're trying to protect \$750 million, which will probably get to \$1 billion? Why can't we be asking those types of protection questions, at least to the government in a committee? Why can't we be fulfilling our needs for the Ornge committee that we had struck and was actually finally getting to the bottom of it?

Speaker, we can't support this without amendment. We need committees and we will continue to push for those committees.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to first say thank you to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his notes on his debate on this bill. Respectfully, I do appreciate when I make a comment saying, "Yes, absolutely, he's correct. There are things more important that we certainly need to discuss," it's not an argument or an arguable way of discussing it, but a mutual, respectful way. I think that's what debate is about. We absolutely need to make sure that there are more consumer protections when it comes to cellphones. We talked about the youth. That's what youth is growing up on in this generation. It's all about technology. It's about the wireless cellphone, it's about wireless Internet. If you go to a coffee shop, there's WiFi. This is the wave of the future.

Absolutely, there are more important things that we need to make sure our economy gets stimulated by,

which are jobs, of course. We want to make sure that that happens.

Part of the debate that we have on this bill is making sure that there is that consumer protection, as I mentioned, for the youth. They're a big market that's going to be forthcoming, but also seniors need the protection. I know a lot of seniors who are using cellphones because they have to stay in touch with their grandchildren. If you don't text, you're not going to know where they are.

Sometimes seniors don't always have that grasp of the contract when they're entering into that situation, as well as youth. That's why we need to make sure if and when this gets to committee—and I'm very much in agreement with the fact that we need to strike these committees so that we can have this kind of service that people want to have, because it's a need. It's basically a household appliance now, a cellphone. Everybody's got one. The contracts have to be easier to understand and easier to use—and protection for consumers, absolutely.

Let's get the committees working and get this over with so that we can talk about more important things to get people back to work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin by thanking everybody who has spoken to this bill today, and in particular the members from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and London-Fanshawe.

I did want to address a few things they said. One was the whole idea of, is this important enough to be working on—particularly the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I just want to say that in life there's that big rule: the important versus the urgent. Of course, slaying the deficit is number one, and it's the one thing that we're all focused on, but that doesn't mean we don't take care of all of the things that make the lives of Ontarians better.

I can tell you that this is one bill that is going to be welcomed by every single Ontarian, because we know almost everybody, from 14-year-olds to seniors, have cellphones. It's just part of our lives. It ought to be that being able to pay a cellphone bill is easy and simple, and I ought to be able to know exactly what the heck I'm exactly paying for.

I, for one, feel that yes, there are a lot of important things out there that this government needs to focus on and it is focusing on them, but we cannot forget some of these issues that are really, really important as well for everyday Ontarians.

Personally, I always feel that every contract, any contract, whether you're buying a condo or you're entering into a cellphone contract, ought to be in plain English because that's what it's about, so that I understand and everybody understands exactly what we are signing. It ought not to be to the benefit of lawyers and large companies who are trying to protect and put in fine print which I or everyday Ontarians don't understand.

I think this bill, in principle, is a very, very important thing in terms of bringing contract law to everyday people, so that when I sign something I actually

understand what I'm signing and it's not a lot of fine print and you turn the page over and there's pages and pages of what I call light grey ink that's really difficult to read. I ought to know what I'm signing, and that's what this does, so—oh, I see that I'm very passionate and I'm out of time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I wanted to comment on the remarks made by the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. He covered, actually, a number of pressing issues in his riding. He also talked about this legislation, Bill 82. But I think that's the point. There are an awful lot of pressing issues we have to deal with this fall and this winter. We are obviously not out of the woods on the jobs front. People in my riding, and we know this from door-knocking last year, are having trouble paying the bills. People are starting to realize we have an ever-growing deficit and a looming debt that's projected to come in at something like \$411.4 billion.

I wonder about this legislation. I may actually be changing my views, because we now realize—this is federal, first of all—the federal government has launched consultations. The federal government is taking back responsibility for this particular issue. We know that Quebec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, now Ontario at the governmental level are doing some work on this. This lies in federal jurisdiction. I'm beginning to wonder if we're going to spend our time carrying on with this particular piece of legislation that mirrors an excellent private member's bill that came forward from a government member, actually, last year. Nothing happened with that private member's bill. I'm beginning to wonder, why are we doing this? Are we going to intentionally duplicate work that is being done and should be done by the federal government? Are we going to end up with a patchwork of legislation? Is Ontario going to contribute to this kind of duplication?

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to join this debate and talk about wireless usage or wireless phones as an issue of accessibility. More and more, we're seeing that wireless phones are the primary means of telecommunication for a majority of Ontarians. What we're also learning is, more and more, wireless services are the primary way that people access the Internet. The growing trend is that this will be the primary way that the majority of people in Ontario and across the world will use to access the Internet.

The Internet has been touted as the great democratization of knowledge. Knowledge is much more ubiquitous, much more accessible on the Internet. If we agree with that principle, then it's more important for us to look at wireless services as an issue of accessibility, as a way of equalizing the playing field for those who want to access information, knowledge, learning as a tool for education or for social change.

If that's correct, then we must really look to the affordability piece. While disclosure is very, very important, while being aware of contract issues regarding payments and cancellation is very important, we also have to turn our minds to the affordability piece. If we look at the Internet as a tool to allow the vast sharing of knowledge, then we want to make sure that it's accessible. We want to make sure that wireless services are also accessible and affordable so that people are not impeded from accessing the Web, are not impeded from accessing knowledge or from sharing their wealth of experience because of an affordability issue or because of a socioeconomic issue.

While we're looking at disclosure—and it's important to ensure that contracts are fair, easy to understand and legible—we also have to turn our minds to making wireless services affordable so that everyone has access to wireless services and, consequently, the Internet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We go back to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the members from London-Fanshawe, Mississauga East-Cooksville, Haldimand-Norfolk and Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

I fully concur with my colleague from London-Fanshawe. She's always respectful and we always have, between her and I, respectful debate. That's the whole idea of this. The whole idea, I think she would concur, is that we need to have that respectful debate in a committee, where we can actually have debate, make amendments and move a bill forward. Then it becomes law, and the people who we're serving get what they deserve and desire. I also think she's got a bit of a vested interest, but all in the greatest way because she's a new grandma—not too long ago, about a year and a little bit. I can see how that will impact her.

My colleague from Mississauga East-Cooksville—again, very passionate. She's someone who has a high level of respect, and we also have good debate. She talked about it being important and urgent. Well, if it's important and urgent, then strike some committees so we can take that important, urgent matter and again have that respectful debate, get to where we need to be and make it law so we can move on to the more important and urgent debates that we should be having about the budget, our deficit, the gas plants and all the other things that I've already talked about.

She said that it should be easy to pay your bills easily and simply. Again, we're suggesting that this needs to be amended to ensure that it's a national and consistent approach, with standards that all of us across this country can do so that we're actually working as a great country collaboratively rather than against each other.

She talked about lawyers and big companies. I would suggest, when we go back to the current situation that we have with the Mississauga gas plant—a lot of lawyers and big companies involved there. I think maybe we needed some consumer protection against the government in this case; we might not be sitting where we are today.

Haldimand-Norfolk: Mr. Toby is always on top of things. He's talking about the real things. He's talking about jobs and paying bills and lowering the deficit on behalf of his taxpayers. He asked a very important question: Why are we debating this one here in the House when it should be at a committee? What value is there to the taxpayer and what are we really going to get out of it at the end?

My friend from Bramalea-Gore-Malton talked about affordability and accessibility. I agree wholeheartedly, but we need to get this bill to debate so we can amend it and ensure that it's affordable, accessible and what the taxpayers of Ontario need. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 82. It's titled Wireless Services Agreements Act. We were leaning towards this legislation. I know that the private member's bill put together last year by Mr. Orazietti was very well done, very detailed. He had a good handle on this. I'm really wondering now if we should maybe put a bit of a hold on this. I'm suggesting perhaps a sober second thought, because we have heard now that the federal government has kicked in on an area of jurisdiction that is federal. It is federal. I wonder why there was a bit of a delay until now, but we understand that they are conducting hearings.

I don't get complaints about cellphones and cellphone bills. I checked with my constituency office this afternoon: nobody phones my office—and we get an awful lot of phone calls at my office on everything from the drought this summer, cattle, Caledonia, horse racing; of course, the debt, the deficit; lack of jobs; of course, wind turbines—we're right in the thick of that right now. As far as me dealing with people who cannot understand their cellphone contract, we're not getting those kinds of calls. I'm assuming they would be, perhaps, if they had to go to that level, phoning the federal MP in my riding, phoning that constituency office. We checked this afternoon. Our federal MP isn't getting calls about this either. However, we do know that—

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I don't know whether you want to record that interjection; I could read it later and see if it made any sense. Anyway, I'm not getting calls about this, in contrast to so many other issues, issues that have been raised this afternoon.

So is this legislation, even though it didn't kick in on what one of the Liberal government members introduced last year—I'm wondering now; I'm having second thoughts. Are we jumping the gun? The CRTC is preparing regulation and they're doing what I understand is quite an intensive and fulsome consultation, citizen participation, something that will be far more extensive than we would ever get from a committee if we ever were to see a committee formed that we could send this proposed legislation to.

I understand the bill was announced at the same time that the federal government announced their consulta-

tions. I don't know whether we're playing follow-the-leader here. We know that Ontario is always following Quebec, which has already put together regulations. The concern is, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Manitoba, everyone goes their separate ways and comes in with their own approach to this. Again, to use the old saw, are we going to end up with a patchwork quilt of confusing regulation across the Dominion of Canada? We've seen this in the trucking industry. This inhibits trade. This inhibits the proper management of companies. It's a barrier to doing business. Are we going to be part of the problem rather than the solution if we go forward with this legislation?

Obviously, consumers need protection. This is a federal issue. I defer to the federal government. I'm opposed to any kind of duplication. We've seen this kind of duplication. We've gone down this road before.

I think of the Toxics Reduction Act. The federal government has a registry of toxics. In their wisdom, this present Ontario government decided to duplicate what is rightfully in the bailiwick of the federal government. I don't mean to criticize anyone who may be present here today who maybe had something to do with that.

Think of the pesticides bill. The federal government looks after that. The federal government has a registry. Why would the Ontario government jump in and, again, as with toxics reduction, come up with some unnecessary duplication of something that lies within the bailiwick of the federal government?

1710

We know that this bill kills Bill 5. This kills Mr. Orazietti's bill. It had been referred to a committee back in the days when this Ontario Legislature had committees. That was last year. There it sits. Now, in its wisdom, this government—again, I suppose a lack of new ideas or do a copycat and come in with legislation that actually does not seem to be as comprehensive as Bill 5, the legislation put forward by Mr. Orazietti.

Just to go back to the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, they are forming a national code. Does this make this redundant? Does this make all our work superfluous? I think we should rethink what we're doing here. The CRTC, as I mentioned, is launching a public consultation process to gauge the views of consumers, to find out what kind of new rules could be required with respect to the sale of wireless services for smart phones, tablets and the like, and they're holding public hearings.

Again, why are we jumping into legislation right now? How extensive are the provincial public hearings going to be, if there ever were going to be public hearings, if there even was to be any modicum of citizen participation or industry involvement or consumer involvement in this issue? Or is this just a make-work project? Are we just kind of in here to attempt to fill time till 6 o'clock in the afternoon?

It's an important issue; I don't take that away from this attempt at legislation. We're looking at an \$18-billion market with respect to cellphones and other

wireless devices, and I applaud the CRTC for stepping in on this. I think at one time it was deemed unnecessary to do this. It was felt that competition in the Canadian market would merit more of a hands-off approach to leave the consumer on their own.

Like I say, I don't get complaints, but I am aware of some of the people who set up a little table in a mall to sell these kinds of devices. A young person comes along and maybe they've got access to a debit card. They want a cellphone. Certainly young people want to have these kinds of devices and they get talked into dropping 300 bucks or 400 bucks on something like this, something they can ill afford. Perhaps their parents find out about this; they try and track down this perhaps somewhat fly-by-night operation—like I say, a table set up in a mall. What have you got to fall back on? You just eat it and cancel the cellphone or try and disable it so there aren't any more charges. Obviously we need something. We need some kind of a structure there. A few other provinces are ahead of us on this, and now the federal government has stepped in.

As far as the CRTC, they acknowledge the complexity of this issue. Something that's quite apparent when I listen to some of the presentations here this afternoon, and even my presentation—it's very clear I don't know a heck of a lot about this issue. It's not something I deal with through my offices. Twenty-seven million people in Canada have one of these systems. They need assistance to make some informed decisions. Maybe they're not part of a company or a corporation or this operation here, where central purchasing looks after the wheeling and dealing and getting a good rate or a good initial price and checking out how much it's going to cost to get out of a bad deal. Someone has to step in on this. The Ontario government has done nothing to date other than introduce some legislation. Again, Speaker, I look to the federal government. That's where this kind of stuff lies.

As Canadians, we use these things all the time. I think it's more prevalent in the Dominion of Canada than just about anywhere else in the world, even though we do have the infrastructure in place for the wire-based systems. There have been a number of complaints, so I'm told, about these kinds of contracts and, as I've indicated, the kind of complaints I get are about the drought, the cattle industry, the high price of feed, what this Liberal government has done to the horse racing industry. Caledonia—here's an issue. I've yet to see that come before a committee. I want to mention one name. Merlyn Kinrade passed away a few days ago. There's someone who did more to fight this issue in Caledonia than just about anybody in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I wanted to give my comments on this very important bill. Ontario is taking strong action to help eliminate the shock many consumers get from opening wireless services bills. The official opposition talks all the time about electricity bills. They never talk about the telephone bill, and,

especially, they never talk about the cable bill. If there is one thing that I am afraid to open in my house, it is the cable bill. You never hear them talking about it. They talk about electricity. What would you do away with in your house: electricity or telephone or cable? You wouldn't do away with electricity. You need electricity. But the opposition, they get so many phone calls about the electricity bill. I never get any phone calls in my office, but the opposition does. I don't know if they are all connected to the opposition, but I never do, and they do.

The member from Haldimand-Norfolk said, "I don't get complaints about the telephone. I called my MP, and he said he does not think it's important." I think it's very important. I think it's very useful to have a cellular phone, but I think it's important to know what you pay for. I would ask everybody in the House to support this and to protect those consumers who use the cellular and iPad and all this jazz. It's important to know, when you use it, how much it's going to cost you, to have a contract in plain language.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to follow the Duke from Haldimand-Norfolk. He always puts in lots of thought and he always brings up his constituents' concerns.

But just before I go on to his accolades, I'd like to just make a little bit of a reply to the minister, respectfully, and suggest—she says she gets no calls. I would like to offer her an opportunity. If she would give me her office numbers, both constituency and Queen's Park, and her personal email and personal cellphone, since we're talking about this, I will pass it on to all the people that call my office about electricity bills and the Green Energy Act, and I think I can change her life a little bit very quickly.

We're talking about it all the time because it matters to people in their homes. It's a 56% increase staring them in the face over the next five years. They are worried about their ability to pay their home heating and their hydro bills. It's absolutely critical to the people.

It's why, in this House, my colleague Mr. Barrett has spoken very eloquently about the people in his riding who are calling about the drought this summer. They're calling about the decimation of the horse racing industry. They're talking about Caledonia—something that's never getting talked about in this House. They're talking about the Green Energy Act. They're talking about the record-setting debt that the Liberals have incurred over their reign of terror over the last nine years. Those are the important things that we should be talking about.

There are no committees. Even if we get this thing through—he said very strongly that this is a federal jurisdiction. It should be a consistent, standard bill across this country, and unless we know what they're doing, they can supersede everything anyway. Why would we waste more time and energy talking about this rather than talking about gas plant fiascos and eHealth, which truly

are going to impact the taxpayer of Ontario for billions and billions and billions of dollars? Why are we not talking in this House about why there aren't committees, and have not been for 35 days, to move bills of any state through so that we can be talking about them? Why aren't we debating more strongly in this House exactly why we can't get committees to get to the answers on things like the Mississauga gas plant and the billion dollars that that's going to cost the taxpayer?

We need to be talking about those critical issues. This is one that hopefully will go to committee someday, but until then, let's get back to the real matters of the day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?
1720

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me just start off by saying that I've enjoyed the debate here this afternoon. Let's make one thing clear: Most of the contracts on these cellphones are not written in plain language. That's what this bill is going to require. That's number one.

Number two: There should be a cap on the cost if you want to get out of a contract. That is not the case right now. I can tell you that just about every young person nowadays in the province of Ontario has a cellphone of one kind or another. I'm sure that we're doing their parents a big favour by putting and subscribing some rules around how these contracts are written and what, in effect, they can charge if they're cancelled.

I'd like to address one other issue that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk raised. That was the toxic issue that he talked about. We are very proud on this side of the House that we passed a law banning the use of pesticides on people's lawns—front yards and backyards etc. Now, I know that in some cases the lawns may not be quite as pretty as they were before, but from a study that the Ministry of the Environment did about two years after the ban went into effect, they found out that there was 80% less toxic material in the 187 rivers and streams in the urban areas where the pesticides had been banned. I'm all for a government such as our government that basically says that the more toxic material that we can keep out of our environment—out of our water streams and out of our landfill sites—the better it is not only for this generation, but for generations to come as well.

I know at the end of the day that no matter what the Conservatives and New Democrats may be saying about this bill, something tells me that they're going to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Time for one last question or comment.

I'll return to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I thank the members for their comments and contributing to the debate. I would like to go back to Bill 82. As we know, Quebec, I think, was the forerunner on some of this. Manitoba and Nova Scotia are working on this, and now Ontario. But most importantly, the federal government has kicked in. Perhaps there was a delay that may not have been warranted. I

know at one time it was felt that competition would kick in and there would be self-regulation with respect to the benefit to consumers. But I think it's very important that the CRTC is holding hearings; they have launched public consultation; and then, beyond that, a public hearing will be held January 28 in Gatineau, Quebec.

All Canadians are invited to share their views; Ontarians are invited to share their views. I think this is very important. This really lies in the federal jurisdiction. We need a national system. Why on earth are we creating more segmented, province-by-province rules and regulations for yet another industry, in this case, a very important and growing industry?

So people are invited to share their views with the federal government. Comments will be accepted until November 20 of this year—there's not that much time. You can fill out comments online, address them to the secretary general of the CRTC. They're looking at a number of precise issues: terms and conditions that should be addressed in a code for these kinds of devices we're debating; to whom the code should apply; how the code should be enforced; and how the codes affecting this should be assessed. I vote with the federal government on this one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a real pleasure to be able to stand in this august assembly and address this bill, Bill 82, the Wireless Services Agreements Act. The intent of Bill 82, in my understanding, is to address the growing number of complaints that cellphone users have with their service providers as this industry rapidly advances its technology. You can't help but notice the rate of cellphone use in Ontario is way up. We've heard from a number of members' comments during this debate that a whopping 77% of Ontarians own a cellphone. I think that might be low; it's probably higher than that. Ontarians of all ages are using these phones to stay connected, increase productivity and reach out to their families and friends wherever they are. Seeing as the cellphone industry is now interacting with more than three quarters of Ontarians, it's no wonder that this government is attempting to focus on this file.

However, we in the PC caucus are a little bit concerned with the timing of this legislation. As we have heard, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, otherwise known as the CRTC, is working right now to bring in national regulations that would cover a lot of the same areas in this bill. To that point, just four days ago the CRTC announced its consultation process on its website. The former speaker from Haldimand-Norfolk spoke about that so I won't repeat it.

One of the comments of the chairman of the CRTC was: "Our goal is to make sure that Canadians have the tools they need to make informed choices in a competitive marketplace. In the past, Canadians have told us that contracts are confusing, and that terms...can vary...."

The federal authority is holding consultations, but the provincial government does not appear to be doing the

same thing. We, as a caucus, are a little bit concerned that this government is pursuing legislation that will create a patchwork of different regulations. This is another reason, as a number of members have said, that the sooner we can get this bill to committee—and a number of other committees struck as well—we would be able to resolve this.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, and anyone else out there listening or in this House, when you add more regulations what you end up doing is adding more red tape, which ends up costing consumers in the long run. It ends up costing users and customers.

I believe, as a legislative body, we have to move very carefully to ensure that if we are bringing in new regulation, it is in fact necessary so we don't end up tying up residents and small business in Ontario with more restrictive red tape.

Despite the concern that this government will be creating redundant regulations, I do feel that Bill 82 is a step in the right direction and should be examined further by our legislative committees in this Legislature. Bill 82 proposes to allow consumers to break unsatisfactory contracts without having to pay the full liability for the remainder of the agreement. Of course, anyone who has ever had a cellphone knows that this can be a very costly proposition and will become a growing concern as more and more people transition to wireless as their primary telecommunication service.

But breaking a contract is far from the only concern consumers have with cellphone providers. Monthly base charges, minutes and data included in the base charge, additional minutes and data rates, notice of roaming charges, early termination fees etc. all contribute to the overwhelming feeling that many consumers get when dealing with their telecommunications company.

However, a rushed approach to legislation is also dangerous. Good, thorough consultation is the solution, but in the past this government has been negligent in its commitment to broadly consult with Ontarians.

I am also concerned that consultation has been forgotten by this government, and we are offered no guarantees that this bill won't be just one more of those same exercises in grandstanding, wedging Ontarians against each other or chasing positive press over good policy that this government has committed to recently—as a friend of mine, a colleague, says, “Politics over people.”

Mr. Speaker, there are many proposals for improving cellphone service in Ontario and Canada. Some are radical, some are less so. It is useful in this regard to examine the comment sections of various news websites that deal with cellphone regulation stories. One often cited is the abolition of the three-year term and the mandating of a maximum 24 months for a contract. In the context of easier and less hassling cancellations, such a proposal becomes redundant, but if it were implemented, it would not be beneficial to the consumer.

Three-year terms are not an ideal agreement to begin with. Smart phones have a shorter shelf life than that. The warranty does not extend that long and if the cus-

tomers requires a new handset, it usually comes with a brand new agreement.

Other proposals include mandatory unlocking of the mobile device once it is paid off or the contract is up.

The argument on the consumer side is that should a device last that long and be paid off through consumer compliance with the contract terms, it should become his or her property. Another bill by the member from Sault Ste. Marie, Bill 5, included just such a provision, yet it is nowhere to be found in Bill 82. It may have been an omission or the result of consultations with the industry. In any case, it is a proposal a number of people are open to.

1730

When we examine the speed at which technology is developed, combined with a shorter life of most high-technology gadgets, following a two- or three-year term the original device will seem to have depreciated significantly; moreover, it would have been superseded by newer, more attractive models, and therefore of little market value.

The prospect of an unlocked smart phone at the end of a term could also be an encouragement to consumers to take greater care of their devices. We are sometimes treated to offers of no-questions-asked warranties on some goods, which include repairs due to mishandling by the owner. On its surface, it's a godsend for the consumer, who won't need to worry about his or her choices and any decisions, but in the long run, it is an excuse for waste.

This leads me to another issue at play in this bill and the debate that surrounds it. The PC Party, more than anyone else in this chamber, has always stood on the side of personal freedom, choice and responsibility. We're also the party that first acknowledges that a truly efficient market in any industry is founded on rules and transparency. I'm concerned that the government intent with this bill is not just to create a transparent marketplace but also to fool consumers.

The laws that would truly reform the cellphone market in Canada can only be made in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. At the provincial level, we can look out for our consumers and protect them against clear abuses and unreasonable charges such as cancellation liabilities. We in the PC caucus will ensure that this government does not let its new law-making instinct become biased against industry in order to score some points with some media types.

Ten million people in this province will be affected by this law at some time or other. The legislative precedent it sets will affect many more in other industries that are not yet regulated according to the principles of Bill 82. We must proceed carefully, listen to advice, examine every proposal and think outside the box, Mr. Speaker. I think, as a number of speakers have said already, earlier on, the sooner we can get this bill to committee, where it can be studied, where we can bring people from the industry and consumers in as well to comment on it, this will be an added benefit as we are able to take a look at a number of things that would make this bill better.

Just some stats here: Manitoba backtracked on full disclosure of every optional service because their contracts ballooned to 30 pages and this caused more red tape. Some 25% of cellphone users are on a month-to-month agreement. If the CRTC passes a regulation, which it looks like it could, this would supersede provincial law anyway. Low-cost subsidiaries of the Big Three and independent local providers have been experimenting with plans and offers that are now being taken up by industry. Increased data use will drive up demand for transmission capacity, leading to the need for more transmission infrastructure, which isn't cheap to install. Bill 5, passed with all-party support on December 1, was referred to committee, where it still resides. Again, as I say, we need to have those committees put to work so that we can deal with Bill 5 plus Bill 82 when it finally gets there. Plus we want to have the Ornge committee reinstated and also the other committees that are dealing with the contempt motions.

This is an important bill for the Canadian public, and we in the PC Party are saying that the committee stage will be very important. We need ample time to listen to consumers, as well as the industry, to make sure we don't make errors that we will all pay for in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It has been like a marathon here today. Every time you blink, it's time to get up and speak again for two minutes on this issue. I think that once we get to committee—and maybe we'll hear about that today with the Premier's press conference at 6 o'clock. Maybe committees will get struck sooner rather than later. But I think we're going to hear about a lot more issues. In some of the documents I've read, they talked about the main complaint being arrears or cancellation fees, not being able to get out of contracts. I think in the rural areas or the rural parts of many of our ridings, the issue of service is a big issue. There isn't a whole lot of transparency around that. I know people—they're rural, and it's not really rural; it's five kilometres outside of the city—who have no telephone service. When people go out to purchase cellphones or they move to that area, it's not disclosed to them that in fact at your address, you don't have any service. Then these people are in for a dollar or they're in for \$1,000 if they happen to have taken a deal where they get a free phone for a two-year contract or a three-year contract, only to find out they have no service.

I've had complaints from people who live in Cooks Mills, which is part of my Welland riding, where they've actually moved in and then they've complained that, in fact, they have no service. They weren't told that they didn't have any service, and they basically said, "Well, it will be three or four years before we actually will put up a tower out in your area—your tough luck." I don't think that's an appropriate response for people who may want to rely on cellphones as opposed to having a home phone. It really then makes people incur two costs: a home telephone service and a cellphone service, where in

populated areas, many people just live with their cellphones today, so they're able to actually effect some savings for themselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait plaisir de parler encore sur le sujet. I agree with the member from Welland. They're not going to put up a tower if they don't have too many clients. These companies are looking at large profits; they're not looking at service.

I'm not surprised that the member from Sarnia-Lambton got up and didn't speak about how expensive these services are. I'm coming back to the cable companies. A lot of the cable companies also have cellular phones. The enormous cost of the cable bill: We never heard them—I don't know for what reason, but I'm sure they have a good reason. They never speak about the cost of cellular or the cost of cable. If there is one bill that I'm afraid to look at, it's the cable: \$300, \$400. You never hear them talking about this. You hear them talking about the electricity, though. I don't pay \$300 or \$400 for electricity in my home, but we do for cable.

It's not service; it's how much profit they can make. If there are not many customers in the area, don't be afraid; they're not going to build a tower there because they're looking at profits, not service.

This bill is excellent. The contract would be written in plain language. There will be, yes, a fee, but a normal fee to cancel, because our youth love to have their cellular phones. They are 18, so they can sign a contract. They go to the mall, they see all these good offers and they don't really understand the ins and outs of the contract. They sign that and then they're stuck with it. This bill will prevent that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My colleague the member from Sarnia-Lambton made a number of excellent points with respect to Bill 82. I appreciate the opportunity to make some brief comments on that.

First of all, he wondered why the government is focusing on this file; for a couple of reasons, the first one being that the federal government has already taken responsibility and the federal government does have primary jurisdiction in this area, it being a matter primarily of telecommunications. There's been a lot of concern that's been expressed this afternoon about having the province also waded into it from the perspective of having duplication, overlapping of agreements, and then of course having a patchwork of provincial programs across the country. It would seem that it would make more sense to have the federal government primarily deal with this issue and perhaps have the provincial government take more of a back seat in this area.

But the other issue that he commented on with respect to why the government was focusing on this is the fact that there are many other issues that are far more important that this House should be dealing with right now, that this is not something that we've heard in our community offices. The member from Haldimand—

Norfolk commented on that. He indicated there were other issues relating to drought, relating to the killing of the horse racing industry in his area that were far more important. Certainly I can say that in my own riding, people aren't talking about their wireless contracts. I'm hearing a lot more about the gridlock that is causing hardship for commuters in my area, the riding of Whitby—Oshawa. A lot of people are spending hours commuting to and from Toronto to get to work. They're commenting on the fact that we need the 407 expedited, and I'm glad that's finally proceeding. But there are other issues relating to GO trains and buses. We need more of them because we've got such a rapidly growing population. I'm a commuter myself, and I can tell you that there are many times on the way in to Toronto there are many people standing. So those are the things my constituents are concerned about.

1740

We need to get this into committee so we can talk about how we can deal with it. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to join the debate on this issue. My colleague touched upon a point regarding consultations. He was concerned that we don't take a rushed approach to passing a bill. I want to touch on this idea of consultation. I think he makes a good point in the sense that many of the issues that we're seeing in this Legislative Assembly are due to a lack of consultation. Where it comes to laws that will impact Ontario, I think it's incumbent on us, as legislators, to ensure that the public has a very vibrant and vigorous role in the implementation and creation of these laws.

Where it comes to the wireless service agreement, I think that this bill is on the right track. I think we can definitely benefit from consultation. But I think as a message for the overall activities that go on in this House, we should ensure that we take a very serious consideration of our role in making public consultation, making public input—first of all, making it easy to have the public have a say and being really serious about listening to their opinions. I think we would have avoided things like the Oakville and Mississauga power plant closures or cancellations at the eleventh hour if the government had conducted some prior consultations.

Looking at the two bills—one was presented by the member from Sault Ste. Marie. There is a clear oversight which was brought up. It is an important point. Why is it that that piece was left out, where if you pay down your bill, if you pay down your phone, at the end of your contract you don't own your phone? Why was that left out? I think that's a very important piece that is definitely in favour of the consumer. It may not be to the advantage of the supplier or the industry, but we should have that back in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Sarnia—Lambton for his reply.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to thank at this time the member from Welland, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the member from Whitby—Oshawa and also my colleague from Bramalea—Gore—Malton.

Mr. Speaker, I think we've heard a lot of debate here today, and I know this is going to continue for a little while longer. I think a number of people—I tried to address in my remarks that we need to get this bill to committee as soon as possible, along with a number of other issues that we want to discuss. As the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton said, there may be a number of instances that we're into in this Legislature in dealing with other issues, whether it's gas plants or energy issues or the Green Energy Act—if they'd have had committee hearings where there would have been actual input, they would have actually maybe solved some problems there.

I'd like to see if the minister would co-sponsor with me. The minister for corrections brought up cable bills. I think it's probably a man thing because I think they control the TV things at home. So they probably don't worry about what the bills are because they're watching sports or Fox News. Probably if the ladies—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Fox, yes. That's why I was going to ask—I'm glad you brought up Fox News. I would like to know if I could get someone to co-sponsor with me here, all-party support, that we could have Sun News and Fox News here in the Legislature. I'm getting tired of watching a lot of this other stuff that's on there. Anyway, I think I could reduce my bills. We could reduce our bills in our homes and our condos if we had Sun News and Fox News here at the Legislature, so we could get a fair and balanced view of what's taking place across this province and across the country.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Fair and balanced, that's what we ought to do. Free the TV set. Anyway, we could have a fair and balanced discussion of what's going on. I think it would raise the level of the debate in this House because people would have a lot better idea and they'd be better informed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I won't be as animated as the member from Sarnia—Lambton, but I will plug Sun TV. I think that's quite an addition to our media in Canada, and I hope it continues.

I'm pleased to talk to Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device. The topic, in itself, is pretty long, much like the contracts we end up signing for current use of mobile devices.

As I was reading the explanatory note, there were a couple of phrases I'd like just to talk about first and I think the government should look at here. Bottom paragraph: "A supplier must have a system in place for

providing advance notice to the consumer when the consumer accesses a service under the agreement that will result in a cost in addition to the minimum periodic cost.”

I think if the government took that statement itself and applied it to their day-to-day functioning, we wouldn't have gotten the health tax, the HST or any of the other taxes they've thrown at us, because you'd actually have to warn the voters before you went into an election and promise what you're going to deliver—not, get elected and then change your promises and then throw in all these taxes. So I think if they took that sentence there and applied it to how they govern, this province would probably be better off.

The other point I saw in here—I think the Minister of Energy would probably like this sentence: “A consumer is allowed to cancel a wireless agreement at any time and without any reason.” That would have cleared him totally on the gas plants, but thank goodness that was not in the law.

As we talk about bills and that—and the government, it's kind of funny, they bring out this bill that evil Rogers, Bell, Telus etc., with all their fine print and what have you, are duping the consumer. I happened to renew my driver's licence; my birthday was at the end of September, and—

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you.

I was working so hard that I was a little late in paying it. So instead of going in in August with that little doodad they send you, the bill, for 70 some-odd dollars, I went, I don't know, October 2 to renew—I guess it was October 3; it would have been Friday when we're at home—my licence and, lo and behold, the price had gone up about 10%—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: At a ServiceOntario, face to face—a private ServiceOntario, by the way.

So it went up, but the bill clearly said \$76, I believe, and I think I paid \$82 or something.

I had a constituent email me the day before and complain about the fact that he got—his birthday was in September too; he went on time. His bill in August was for \$70, and he went in in September and they charged him 80 some-odd dollars. He wanted me to find out about it, so I was going, and I got charged the same extra, and I said, “Was it a late fee?” No, there's no late charges on my thing. Then she points: “You see this little line here you can barely see: ‘Prices subject to change’?” We added that because we're changing the prices over the next few years.” Then she warned me that next September 1, there's another price increase. So anybody who's getting their driver's licences next September, get them in August; you'll get them a little cheaper because the government's got their fine print on there: “Prices subject to change.”

I think, maybe, by looking at the fact that this bill is attacking private companies out there—and I'm not saying that's bad—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Practice what they preach.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Practice what they preach.

I'll digress a bit. My staff recently wanted to cancel her cellphone because she got a new one, and it was going to cost her over \$400 to cancel that bill. I think that's a little outrageous. Mind you, I think there needs to be this regulation change, and the member from Sault Ste. Marie, as I said earlier, came out with a good bill that somehow their minister wanted to trump and come out with her own instead of talking together and working together. But I think we do need this in place so we do lower those costs.

The other point, I think, is reasoning for this bill is if you go to the TVs and phone systems—like regular land lines—the bills you do get for that, I have noticed, time and again, that the service you get tends to degrade over time, and unless you call and complain, they don't do anything. So I think there's something amiss in this legislation as a whole as to why we aren't getting customer service and the best price. Maybe there's not enough competition in the marketplace, or maybe we're letting them write too many rules and regulations on their own.

Anyway, back to the bill: As I said earlier, it is important to have consumer protection, and we've got to remember, the consumer will have some responsibility. They're still going to have to read the contracts they're given and understand what they're going to be signing, but we do need to make it easier. If you notice, our cellphones—the BlackBerry, iPhone, what have you; our iPads and such—have gotten easier over time, but the contracts to get their services have grown more and more complex as we've gone along. We need to make sure that they get easier as the technology gets easier to use.

I'd like to also point out that it may be freeing up these companies' abilities to increase access across rural Ontario. Maybe there are some regulations that are out there that are inhibiting them. I'm from rural Ontario, and there's quite a few dead spots throughout my riding where you drive along and just lose your signal—or the fact that you can't get high-speed Internet. I think that many of the members are from the GTA and probably don't understand what it's like not to have high-speed Internet, because it's very accessible in urban Ontario, whereas in rural Ontario it's getting harder and harder.

I would very much be in support of passing this legislation as soon as we're done debate. It's too bad the PC Party is the only party that really wants to debate this bill. I'd love to hear why the government has competing interests between their member from Sault Ste. Marie and the minister. Why couldn't they get along and come out with one bill? But we should finish this debate and get it to committee—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Oh, yes, committee. You're right. There are no committees. All the bills we've passed since last year are sitting in committee. I'm part of the general government committee, and I know last time we met, we were doing an auto insurance review. We were going to

come out with our final report to tell the government where they've gone wrong and how they can improve it, but we can't quite get together to do that, because the government has gotten rid of committees.

There are quite a few bills just in my general government, and I think there have been a few private members' bills passed that have been sent to that committee that I'd love to discuss—get stakeholders' information, get it passed so that we can have third reading debate, get it to third reading and get it passed so we can improve Ontario, but we can't. It's not being said enough. We say it enough in here, but it's got to get outside these walls: There are no committees. It's like filling up your car full of gas: you're ready to go, but you haven't turned the ignition to "start" yet. Those committees are those ignition keys to get things going—

Mr. Bill Walker: Who strikes the committees?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Who strikes the committees? Good point. Well, the government, the House leader. He's sitting over there. I'd love to have those committees set up. I really want to get to work on this committee work. I really enjoyed my committee work with auto insurance. It was quite informative; we're ready to roll on it, and there's lots of other business. It's quite a learning experience. This is how we get to work together, for the people listening at home: It's an all-party committee, and we get to talk, interact, debate friendly, have some hard discussions and at the end of the day we come to some sort of agreement. That's democracy at work. I'd love to get these committees going so we could pass this bill and other bills.

We've been working really hard. There's a bill coming up this Thursday from Simcoe-Grey, the Ability to Pay Act. This is going to relieve so much pressure on our municipalities. We're going to fix arbitration and make sure that whatever the local municipality can afford to pay—if it goes to arbitration, the arbitrator will take that into consideration. That will decrease taxes, costs—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: What's that? Sorry, sir?

Mr. John Yakabuski: That makes a lot of sense.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It makes a lot of sense. It's great sense, and it's coming up this Thursday. I'd love to pass it this Thursday and take it to committee, so we can get down on this and start helping local municipalities, because I know—

Mr. John Yakabuski: We've got to get those committees going.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: We've got to get those committees going—and I know the municipalities are for this. My municipalities, in my riding, have all endorsed this bill, and I'm finding the ground—Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga, has endorsed this legislation, so I'm sure if we can get this bill passed on Thursday, we can get these committees formed and get these in there. We can get this debated, and I can tell you, the municipalities, we can get this through committees and passed by third reading for Christmas. We could make it a Christmas present for municipalities if we get these committees struck. We're already going to get—

Mr. John Yakabuski: We can get this bill passed by Christmas—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: We can get this bill passed. We can start helping all those young people that get stuck with the phone bills because they didn't read the contracts—or the seniors, the same thing, and anybody in between. We can do a lot of Christmas presents here for the people of Ontario if we can get these committees struck.

Mr. Bill Walker: Challenge them. Challenge them.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Yes, I will do that. I'm going to challenge the government House leader and the government over there: Let's form the committees first thing tomorrow morning, or let's do it tonight. I'll call our House leader and the NDP's House leader. We'll get the committees struck tonight, and we'll give an early Christmas present for all of Ontario: We'll get these bills passed and make some good for Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1754.

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